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"In Christ:" Participation Language in Paul

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“In Christ:” Participation Language in Paul

A Guided Research Paper Presented to Dr. Oster of

Harding School of Theology

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Master of Arts in New Testament

By

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Introduction

Over the past several decades there has been heated debate concerning the New Perspective on Paul.¹ It would be impossible within this paper to chart the debate and all of the minutiae involved. Nevertheless, a general understanding of the NPP is critical to this paper. Kent Yinger does an excellent job of putting the NPP in its proper context and plotting out the major issues in the NPP debate.² The NPP takes issue with many assumptions of the Reformation and systematic views of Paul, such as justification is by grace through faith and without conditions of obedience and good works and the predominant emphasis of justification as the epicenter of Paul's theology. The NPP was inaugurated by E. P. Sanders's work *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in which he proposed that Judaism was not characterized by a legalistic works-righteousness approach to be justified before God. Sanders argued for what he called "covenantal nomism" in which Jews were justified by being in and remaining in the covenant. He argued that God's election of Israel and giving the covenant was an act of grace, and if Jews wanted to receive God's covenant promises and blessings, then they must continue to be faithful to the covenant through their obedience to God's commands.³ Sanders argued that in his letters, Paul was not correcting legalistic Jews for thinking that they would be justified for obedience. Instead, Sanders showed that Paul's theology retained many of the same

¹ New Perspective on Paul will be shortened to NPP throughout.

² Kent L. Yinger, *The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011).

³ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, 1st American ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 33-182.

characteristics of “covenantal nomism” only applied within a new covenant framework through participation with Jesus Christ.⁴

Sanders’s work introduced many different themes that have been developed more robustly by other scholars who are interested in Pauline studies. Since Sanders dealt with the issues of justification in Judaism and Christianity, he argued that justification was not only juristic and forensic, but it also involved participation with Christ.⁵ In fact, Sanders stated that the “heart” and “real bite” of Paul’s theology and soteriology was best captured in an understanding of participation and union with Jesus Christ.⁶

Participation and Union with Christ

While Sanders contended that participation was the heart of Paul’s soteriology, he did not view justification in opposition to participation. He stated, “righteousness by faith and participation in Christ ultimately amount to the same thing.”⁷ While Sanders preferred the term “participation” over “justification,” he viewed justification and

⁴ Sanders, 513. “Thus one can see already in Paul how it is that Christianity is going to become a new form of covenantal nomism, a covenantal religion which one enters by baptism, membership in which provides salvation, which has a specific set of commandments, obedience to which (or repentance for the transgression of which) keeps one in the covenantal relationship, while repeated or heinous transgression removes one from membership.”

⁵ Ibid., 502-508.

⁶ Ibid., 502.

⁷ Ibid., 506.

participation as being interrelated and in agreement with one another. According to his understanding, if a person is apart from Christ, then they stand condemned before God.⁸

Sanders listed four phrases that Paul frequently used in his letters to express the pervasive ideas of participation.⁹ This paper will consider the third phrase that Sander lists, viz., “in Christ.” When exploring the ideas of Pauline theology and soteriology, the predominant epistles that are considered are Romans and Galatians, especially in discussions about justification. However, the language of participation can be underappreciated in those letters, particularly in Galatians. Yet, Galatians should not be overlooked in discussions about participation with Christ because Gal. 2:20 overflows with themes of participation. This paper will examine and exegete Paul’s use of ἐν Χριστῷ and ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in the epistle to the Galatians to explore the ideas of participation in congregational settings.

Preliminary Considerations: The Preposition ἐν

One of the most recognizable features of Paul’s writings is the use of ἐν Χριστῷ.¹⁰ Paul uses the prepositional phrase ‘in Christ’ approximately 52 times in the undisputed

⁸ Sanders, 508.

⁹ Ibid., 456-463. The four phrases are: 1) members of Christ’s body or the body of Christ; 2) one Spirit; 3) in Christ; and 4) Christ’s, servants of the Lord.

¹⁰ Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1983), 70; Matthew V. Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 119.

letters and 73 times in the entire Pauline corpus.¹¹ Matthew Novenson gives a survey of some of the grammatical and theological arguments that have been made in regard to Paul's use of this phrase.¹² James Dunn offers more theological categories than Novenson does.¹³

Detailing all of the grammatical and theological concepts associated with the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, some observations and comments must be made in regard to the elusive nature of prepositions and the use of ἐν. One of the difficulties for exegetes is determining the precise meaning of the preposition ἐν. BDAG offers 12 entries of definitions and usages of the preposition ἐν. They are as follows: 1) marker of position defined as being in a location; 2) marker of a state or condition; 3) marker of extension toward a goal that is understood to be within an area or condition; 4) marker of close association within a limit; 5) marker introducing means or instrument; 6) marker of agency; 7) marker of circumstance or condition under which something takes place; 8) marker denoting the object to which something happens or in which something shows itself, or by which something is recognized; 9) marker of cause

¹¹ Counts may vary when considering certain verses like Gal. 5:6 ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ that would be translated “for in Christ Jesus.”

¹² Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs*, 119-126. Grammatically, Paul's use of “in Christ” is multivalent. Sometimes it functions as an adverb, other times it is used adjectivally; sometimes it is a substantive; other times it is complementary to a verb.

¹³ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 396-401. Dunn's categories are set forth as objective, subjective, and oratory.

or reason; 10) marker of a period of time; 11) marker denoting kind and matter; 12) marker of specification or substance.¹⁴

Daniel Wallace lists ten various functions of the preposition ἐν, calling it the “workhorse of prepositions in the NT.”¹⁵ A. M. J. Wedderburn examines several different Greek dictionaries, and he shows how several grammarians describe the function of ἐν. The preposition functions instrumentally, temporally, locally, modally, relationally, and descriptively.¹⁶ The final two ways ἐν functions are described in two senses. The first one, “in the power of” and the second one “in the presence of.”¹⁷

The preposition ἐν has several functions: it can be spatial, instrumental, temporal, and personal.¹⁸ There are benefits to seeing all of these functions within the context of ἐν, but caution must be exercised as well. The role of context is critical since there is such a

¹⁴ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 326. This will be abbreviated as BDAG throughout this paper. BDAG offers 12 main definitions and usages of the preposition ἐν. Also: Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 69.

¹⁵ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 372. The functions he lists are spatial/sphere, temporal, association, cause, instrumental, reference/respect, manner, thing possessed, standard, and an equivalent for εἰς.

¹⁶ A. J. M. Wedderburn, “Some Observations On Paul’s Use of the Phrases ‘in Christ’ and ‘With Christ,’” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 8 (1985), 84-86.

¹⁷ Ibid., 86.

¹⁸ Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 69-70.

wide range of use of the preposition.¹⁹ Campbell argues that the spatial sense of the preposition must be the first consideration in exegesis since it appears to be the primary meaning of the preposition ἐν.²⁰ Particularly with Paul's use of ἐν Χριστῷ, there is a personal relatedness.²¹

First, it must be noted that systematizing the function and usages of any preposition is highly presumptive and impossible to do.²² Second, as Wedderburn warns, interpreters must be careful in trying to fit a particular understanding of the preposition into a "historical" context, which may just be assuming a historical interpretation of Paul's theology and trying to fit it into the Pauline literature.²³ Third, Wedderburn warns of approaching ἐν Χριστῷ as a strict formula, something of an interpretive trap for theologians.²⁴ When interpreters try to fit ἐν Χριστῷ into a formula, they will often be frustrated with the results and realize the futility of such an approach.²⁵ Novenson states,

¹⁹ Campbell, 73.

²⁰ Ibid. Campbell means spatially as the realm of Christ's rule. He is cautious and warns that Christ should not be viewed as something that is abstract or just an ideal.

²¹ Ibid.

²² BDAG, 326.

²³ Wedderburn, 87. See also BDAG, 326. BDAG believes the function of the preposition would likely be more easily understood by the ancient Greeks. BDAG states, "The earliest auditors/readers, not being inconvenienced by grammatical and lexical debates, would readily absorb the context and experience little difficulty."

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Campbell, 73. "It is unfortunate that the preposition ἐν remains so elusive. Due to its enormous range and elastic flexibility, it is difficult to conclude with much certainty what exactly it conveys in the formula ἐν Χριστῷ."

“this is not the way prepositions work in ancient Greek or in other languages, for that matter.”²⁶ There is no way to categorically systematize the uses of a preposition in a formulaic way. The work of interpreting the use of ἐν Χριστῷ will not be solved through fitting it into a formula, but through recognizing the historical, literary, cultural, and biblical contexts that will only be found through careful exegesis of the biblical data.²⁷

Preliminary Considerations: The Meaning of Χριστός

Before examining Paul use of ἐν Χριστῷ in Galatians, it is critical to determine how Paul uses Χριστός. The long time scholarly consensus, and one of the entries in BDAG, is that Χριστός is the personal name that is given to Jesus.²⁸ However, there is growing evidence, especially seen in Matthew Novenson’s work, that Χριστός is a honorific and royal title. Chapter one of this paper will explore this debate, the growing evidence for Χριστός as a honorific title, and other messianic concepts.

More Preliminary Considerations: Introducing Galatians and Authorship

Galatians receives nearly universal acceptance as being genuinely Pauline.²⁹ Paul is the named author in 1:1, and the epistle contains strong theological arguments along

²⁶ Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs*, 121.

²⁷ BDAG does seem to associate Paul’s use of ἐν with their fourth category, “marker of close association within a limit.”

²⁸ BDAG, 1091.

²⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 22; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 1-2; The most contested letters in the Pauline corpus are 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, and the Pastorals.

with the author's use of Old Testament Scriptures to support those theological claims, historical events, personal experiences that Paul had, and the author's writing style all lead to the conclusion that Paul is the author of the epistle.³⁰ Any opposition to accepting Paul as the author of Galatians has only been relatively recent, and any doubts concerning Pauline authorship is considered as a deviation from the historical attestation of Galatians.³¹

Regarding authorship, the question is raised whether Paul used an amanuensis, or secretary, in light of the statement in 6:11. Using an amanuensis was a common practice in the ancient world and then the letter's sender would add a farewell in his own handwriting.³² An amanuensis's writing abilities, vocabulary, and liberties that were given to the amanuensis varied. Some authors would provide a basic outline of what they wanted to say and gave more liberty to the secretary, or the amanuensis might write what the author dictated.³³ There is some evidence found in Paul's other epistles where Paul may have used an amanuensis but wrote the closing remarks in his handwriting.³⁴ Many

³⁰ Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, 41 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), lvii-lviii; Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1.

³¹ Longenecker, *Galatians*, lviii. Bruno Bauer led a minority group of scholars to raise questions about the authenticity of Pauline authorship of Galatians.

³² Ibid., lix.

³³ Ibid., lxi.

³⁴ Looking at the whole of the Pauline corpus, including the disputed letters of Paul, several statements could imply the custom of using an amanuensis (Rom. 16:22; 1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17).

scholars believe that 6:11 indicates a high probability that Paul used an amanuensis in composing Galatians, but this belief does not go unchallenged.³⁵ While this is an interesting area of research and provides a better insight into the letter writing in ancient culture, investigating the probability of Paul's use of an amanuensis is beyond the scope of this paper and does not affect its conclusions.

The Audience: Geographical Location

Paul's letter was written to the churches of Galatia. First, it is obvious that Paul is not writing to just a single congregation of Christians; he is writing to several congregations within a region.³⁶ Internal evidence certainly proves that the recipients of the letter were converted by Paul (Gal. 4:12-15, 19). What is less certain is how recent these audience members converted to Christ. Also, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of the ethnicity of the congregations. The internal evidence certainly points to a vast Gentile Christian audience.³⁷ Witherington makes a convincing argument that these Galatian Christians were largely Gentiles who were attracted and persuaded by a Jewish influence and the irony in that Paul uses Jewish arguments to persuade the Gentile converts not to embrace even more Jewish laws and traditions.³⁸ While the majority of the congregations

³⁵ Longenecker, *Galatians*, lix-lxi; Moo, 1; Schreiner, 376; Frank J. Matera, *Galatians*, Sacra Pagina Series, 9 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 229.

³⁶ Matera 19.

³⁷ David A. DeSilva, *Letter To the Galatians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 26-27; Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 7-8.

³⁸ Witherington, 7-8.

appear to have consisted of Gentile Christians, there appear to have been Jewish Christians in the churches of Galatia as well.³⁹

The exact location of the Galatian congregations is unspecified.⁴⁰ Galatia, as a geographic location, was a region that stretched from modern-day north Turkey that included Celtic tribes.⁴¹ Yet, Galatia could also refer to the Roman province that included cities in the south part of modern-day Turkey, that included the ancient cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, which Paul and Barnabas evangelized in Acts 13 and 14.⁴² Throughout history, a majority of scholars held to the opinion that Paul evangelized the northern, ethnic cities of Galatia at some point in his second missionary journey based on Acts 16:6 and 18:23.⁴³ This hypothesis is the North Galatia theory. Still

³⁹ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 27-28. He presents two major proofs for this interpretative point. First, Paul's focus on unity between two different groups to form the one people of God. Second, when starting a new community of Christians, Paul would first go to the Jewish synagogue and preach to the Jews first until he was rejected and turned out of the synagogue. Following his expulsion from the synagogue, Paul would focus on the mission to Gentiles. According to DeSilva, these Pauline congregations would be ethnically mixed congregations.

⁴⁰ Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 228.

⁴¹ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 28.

⁴² Ibid.; Gorman, 228-229.

⁴³ J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 16; John M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 8; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 29; Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 17. Barclay believes the evidence slightly favors the North Galatian thesis. J.B. Lightfoot presented a strong case for the North Galatia hypothesis based on historical exegetes.

yet, there are several scholars — and most contemporary scholars — who hold to the South Galatia theory and believe Paul’s letter was addressed to the Christians in the provincial Galatia, including the cities that Paul and Barnabas visited in Acts on the first journey.⁴⁴ The message and interpretation of the book is hardly changed based upon acceptance of the North Galatia or the South Galatia theory.⁴⁵

Audience: The Theological Problem

It is important to remember that Paul did not write a systematic theology and his epistles were correspondences with local Christian communities. Paul’s letters were occasional and his primary purpose of writing was to help these congregations continue to thrive.⁴⁶

The epistle to the churches of Galatia addresses a problem from the outset of the letter. Paul foregoes any kind of salutation and opening remarks. Instead, he quickly addresses the issue at hand. The Galatian Christians are being turned away by “another gospel” (1:6-10). Paul makes it clear that whoever is behind this fraudulent gospel is not from God or Christ. The teachers of this counterfeit gospel are bringing disturbance and

⁴⁴ Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxx; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 29; Matera, 24; Gorman, 231-232; Keener, 20; Witherington, 7-8; Schreiner, 26; Moo, 7-8.

⁴⁵ Schreiner, 31. Dating the book of Galatians is complicated by which opinion is held between the North Galatia theory or the South Galatia theory. The South Galatia theory can allow a dating between AD 48-51, believing it was written at some point during the first missionary journey or in the early stages of the second missionary journey. The North Galatia theory requires a later date in the mid-50s because the evidence points to a period when Paul evangelized the northern area of Galatia on his second journey.

⁴⁶ Yinger, 33.

trouble upon these churches (1:7; 5:10, 12). These disturbers of the peace were opposing Paul's teachings and teaching the churches of Galatia that the gospel of Christ required Gentiles to be circumcised and that they must observe Torah to secure a place in the family of Abraham and receive God's grace through the Jewish Messiah.⁴⁷ The reason that Paul is so direct in what he says about these teachers is because their message will cause people to be cut off from Christ (5:4).

Since Paul does not specifically name the people who are preaching the "works of the law," a circumcision and Torah-based gospel, as a requirement for justification, scholars have used various names in an attempt to clarify what these people were teaching the Galatians. Many commentators point to Paul's statement in 1:7 οἱ ταρασσόντες ὑμᾶς ("the ones who are troubling you") and have named Paul's opponents "agitators" or "troublemakers."⁴⁸ Some commentators simply call them Paul's "opponents."⁴⁹ Another name used to describe the opponents is "teachers" or "rival teachers."⁵⁰ Luther preferred the description "false apostles."⁵¹ Still, others prefer the

⁴⁷ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 10; Schreiner, 19; Matera, 11; Keener, 31-34.

⁴⁸ Barclay, 45; Matera, 7-11; Robert Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 334-347.

⁴⁹ Keener, 22-27.

⁵⁰ Martyn, 117-118; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 9. DeSilva mentions that one feature of classical rhetoric was to speak of an author's opponents in vague descriptions so that they did not give more credibility and respect to the opponents.

⁵¹ Martin Luther, *A Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (1575; repr., New York: Carter, 1860), 66.

designation “circumcisionists” — perhaps in an attempt to be more specific in describing the teaching of Paul’s opponents.⁵²

The traditional way to identify Paul’s opponents in the letter to the Galatians is by the term “Judaizers,” referring to Jewish Christians who were requiring Gentile believers to practice circumcision and other Jewish customs.⁵³ Throughout this paper, I will use the term “Judaizer” to refer to Paul’s opponents. The name Judaizer comes from Gal. 2:14 (ἰουδαῖζειν, transliterated ‘ioudaizein’) which means someone who adopts Jewish lifestyles and customs.⁵⁴ One reason the term “Judaizers” has fallen in disrepute is because of the various theories that have been introduced by scholarship since the early 19th century.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the majority of scholarship believes that Paul’s opponents in Galatia were “circumcisionist Jewish Jesus-followers.”⁵⁶ Some aspects of the Judaizers’s

⁵² Gorman, 233. Gorman does not prefer the term “Judaizers” because it is misunderstood, but he is vague and does not explain how the term is misunderstood or misapplied.

⁵³ Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxxix.

⁵⁴ Ibid., lxxxix-xcvi. Also see: BDAG, 478; David A. DeSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 40.

⁵⁵ There have been theories that attempt to identify a Petrine group, associated with Jerusalem and the apostles, and a Pauline group and that this accounts for Paul’s opponents in the epistle. Or others have suggested a “Two Front Theory” which hypothesizes that Paul is battling two groups, one a judaizing group and another a pneumatic group. Moreover, other commentators theorize that the people demanding circumcision are from Gentiles (not Jews) proselytes based upon the present tense of the participle περιτεμνόμενοι in 6:13. See A. E. Harvey, “The Opposition to Paul” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation*, ed. Mark D. Nanos (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 321-333.

⁵⁶ Keener, 23; Martyn, 120-126; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 10-11; Schreiner, 39.

message can be reconstructed through careful mirror-reading, but not all details can be ascertained through this method. The issue of circumcision and Torah observance (dietary restrictions, observance of days, etc.) appear to be the two major pillars of the Judaizers's teachings.⁵⁷

We are uncertain of how Paul found out about the troubles in the churches of Galatian. Martyn suggests that when Paul founded the Galatian churches that he trained some of the members to be teachers. He suggests that Paul ascertained his information from some of these teachers appointed by Paul.⁵⁸ Paul does not name where these teachers come from or specifically call them by name.⁵⁹ He indicts the motives of the

⁵⁷ Barclay, 45, 60; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 10-22. It appears that Paul may be responding to the Judaizers's arguments, beginning in Gal. 3 and the discussion of Abraham. The Judaizers appear to want to link the Abrahamic covenant symbolized by circumcision with the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. The importance of circumcision as part of the Abrahamic covenant cannot be denied. In fact, their argument had some scriptural support from Gen. 17:10-14. All of this necessitated Paul's arguments in Gal. 3 and how Abraham was made righteous by faith, not circumcision, and that Gentiles are made righteous by faith and being joined with the Messiah in baptism, not through circumcision.

⁵⁸ Martyn, 14.

⁵⁹ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 9. Determining the geographic location as to where the Judaizers came from becomes much more difficult to determine than reconstructing their message.

teachers in 4:17 and based upon this verse it could be inferred that these teachers came from another geographic location, but that is more speculative than it is certain.⁶⁰

Paul's Use of ἐν Χριστῷ in Galatians

Understanding the basic background information in Galatians will prepare us for a thorough exegesis of the texts that this paper will focus on. The themes of justification and participation are prevalent in Galatians and there is overlap, much as Sanders pointed out in his works.⁶¹ Paul uses the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ only a handful of times in Galatians.

They are found in:

1:22 I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ)⁶²

2:4 But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), in order to bring us into bondage.

2:17 But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ), we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!

3:14. in order that in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

⁶⁰ Schreiner, 33; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 9; Witherington, 23-24. We certainly must be careful in reconstructing the problems that the Galatian churches were facing. However, caution does not mean we cannot have any degree of confidence in our reconstruction of the problems. I agree with DeSilva that Witherington goes too far. Witherington argues that Paul was not sure of who was causing the trouble in the churches. He doesn't read 3:1 and 5:10 as rhetorical questions. He reads them as Paul's sincere questions in seeking to know who had caused the trouble in Galatia.

⁶¹ Sanders, 506.

⁶² All English Scripture quotations will be from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995. All Greek Scripture quotations will be from the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th rev. ed., 2012.

3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).

3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).

5:6 For in Christ Jesus (ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ὁ Ἰησοῦ) neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

These are the texts that will be studied in detail in chapters two and three of this paper in a search for what Paul means by the use of “in Christ.”

Chapter One

Christ: God's Anointed King

Any discussion pertaining to Paul's understanding of ἐν Χριστῷ must first begin with examining his use of Χριστός. Throughout the Pauline corpus, the term Χριστός is used approximately 375 times. BDAG has two entries in its definition of Χριστός. The first entry defines Χριστός as the “fulfiller of Israelite expectation of a deliverer, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ.”¹ Interestingly, BDAG goes on and states that Χριστός is an appellative and in the second entry of Χριστός they state it is “the personal name ascribed to Jesus.” These definitions of Χριστός represent the majority view of New Testament interpreters throughout the 20th century, especially in conversation with Pauline Christology.

While it may appear that New Testament writers, like Paul, use Χριστός as a second name for Jesus, it is my opinion that Paul is drawing upon Jewish messianic ideals and applying those to Jesus. If this is correct, then ‘Christ’ is more than the primary choice for designating and identifying Jesus. In fact, if Paul is indeed drawing upon messianic concepts and associating them with Jesus, then he is promoting a high Christology; Pauline Christology is one that is rooted in Judaism. It is my contention that when Paul uses Χριστός, he intends for readers to associate the Jewish concepts of the messiah with Jesus. Those concepts, as we will see, involve to some degree or another royal identity, the Davidic lineages, as well as a priestly role. Recognizing the messianic

¹ BDAG, 1091.

expectations in discussions about Χριστός is an important, on-going, and ever-shifting discussion. Many Pauline scholars have gone so far as to say, or imply, that Paul's use of Χριστός has left the term without any significance or its normal linguistic usages. Nils Dahl said, "Paul's Christology can be stated almost without referring to the messiahship of Jesus."² This statement is critical to the name-title debate. For Dahl and others who argue that 'Christ' is a second name of Jesus, they fail to see messiahship language in Paul. And as we will see, those who hold to the titular sense of Χριστός, they contend that Jesus's messiahship is undergirding all of Paul's Christology. So, of course, the debate is deeper than whether or not 'Christ' is Jesus's name or title; the name-title debate really hinges on the depth of Paul's Christology. This chapter will first consider the on-going discussion pertaining to Paul's use of Χριστός as a name, title, or other possibilities. Then, the chapter will conclude with a more theological consideration of what expectations Jesus fulfilled in being the Χριστός.

The question of Χριστός being a name or a title has created a divide among Pauline scholars. Martin Hengel says that Paul does not advance any proof that Jesus is the messiah and anointed of God.³ Hengel goes on to suggest that the Old Testament texts that could be messianic proofs do not play an essential role in Paul's epistles and as such the idea of Jesus as the Messiah is not developed within the Pauline corpus.⁴ Moreover,

² Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 15.

³ Hengel, 67

⁴ Ibid.

he suggests that discussions about Χριστός are best considered in “pre-Pauline tradition” and that, with the exception of ἐν Χριστῷ, Χριστός has the “least distinctive profile” in Paul’s letters.⁵ While Hengel does not altogether dismiss significance and importance to the name ‘Christ,’ he does not yield his argument that Χριστός is a second name for Jesus. He suggests that ‘Christ’ is the designation of Jesus that Paul uses because ‘Christ’ expresses “the uniqueness of Jesus as ‘eschatological bringer of salvation.’”⁶ Hengel does try to show relationship with the title Χριστός as rooted in Old Testament expectations and Paul’s use of Χριστός as a name. Hengel issues a warning of the implications involved in the determination of Χριστός as a name, rather than a title. He recognizes the possibility of damaging the messianic and eschatological expectations within Paul because they read ‘Christos’ as a name.⁷ Hengel’s conclusions appear to be inconsistent because he acknowledges there is uniqueness to Paul’s use of Χριστός, but he believes other terms like ‘Son of God’ are clearer and more distinctive in defining Jesus as the Messiah.⁸

N. T. Wright critiques the lack of recognition Paul’s messianic Christology. Wright states that even though there have been considerable efforts to relate Paul’s

⁵ Hengel, 70.

⁶ Ibid., 71-72.

⁷ Ibid., 70-71.

⁸ Ibid., 71. Hengel states that in Gal. 1:15f with Paul’s use of calling Jesus “Son” this indicates that “Son of God” interpreted the title Messiah and made it more precise.

Jewish heritage, the one area that has been neglected is Jesus's messiahship.⁹ According to Wright, Dahl's position and others leads to the conclusion that Paul knew the messianic traditions of Jesus's messiahship, but he surpassed them. Wright contends that a messianic Christology is explicit in a greater number of passages than is generally accepted.¹⁰ Wright goes on to argue that perhaps the most fundamental evidence to Paul's acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah is that Jesus is the representative of his people.¹¹ Wright's voice of critique brings the critical issue to the forefront: what exactly is Paul's Christology and how deep does it go?

Dahl may have overstated his own case that Jesus's messiahship is not in Paul's Christology because Dahl is not entirely dismissive of any messianic concepts in Paul's theology. He first recognizes that 'Christ' is not completely fixed as a proper name because of the interchangeable forms of 'Jesus Christ' or 'Christ Jesus.'¹² He goes further and acknowledges that texts of Scripture, such as Psalm 110, that address Jesus's lordship and dominion also include the idea of a messianic sovereign.¹³ He would even go on to say that "...this confirms that Jesus's messiahship actually had a fundamental

⁹ N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 41-42.

¹⁰ Wright, *Climax*, 43. The passages he cites are Rom. 9:5; 15:3, 7; 1 Cor. 1:13; 10:4; 12:12. Another text that Wright argues that is critical in shaping Paul's messianic message of Jesus is 1 Cor. 15. See *Climax*, 26-35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹² Dahl, 16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 20.

significance for the total structure of Paul's Christology."¹⁴ Dahl admits that Paul speaks of the messiahship of Jesus in Rom. 1:2-4, but he doubts the significance of 'Christ.'¹⁵ While Dahl does not completely ignore messiah language in Paul, he questions its importance. He argues that saying Jesus is the 'Son of God' or 'Lord' transcends any conceptualization of Jesus's messiahship.¹⁶ So it seems that Dahl is willing to recognize, at least theoretically and categorically, Jesus's messiahship, but he is unwilling to acknowledge any interconnectedness and overlap that messiahship language may have with the lordship of Jesus.

Dahl's scholarly work on Jesus's messiahship is the standard which has set the framework of the discussion about Paul's use of 'Christ' and whether or not Paul was imploring the connotations of messianism in his epistles.¹⁷ Dahl argues that a person can read Paul's epistles and understand 'Christ' as Jesus's surname and still make sense of the epistles. Nevertheless, he acknowledges there is a sense in which Χριστός has a larger

¹⁴ Dahl, 22.

¹⁵ Ibid., 17.

¹⁶ Ibid., 20; Hengel, 75. Dahl and Hengel both agree that the title "Lord" retained a more significant role in connection to Jesus because of the confession of faith "Jesus is Lord."

¹⁷ Hengel, 67. He says Dahl's philological observations "speak for themselves." See Dahl, 15-16. Dahl lists four philological observations as to why Christ is a name and not a title. 1) Χριστός is never a general term but it is always a designation; 2) Χριστός is never used as a predicate (e.g., "Jesus is the Christ"); 3) A genitive is never added (e.g., "the Christ of God"); 4) the form 'Jesus the Christ' is not found in the earliest text of the epistles.

and deeper meaning, while still denying that Paul's emphasis is on Jesus as the Messiah.¹⁸

Dahl warns that reading 'Christ' as a title, rather than a name, leads to an impersonal concept of Jesus's person, work, and ministry.¹⁹ According to Dahl, retaining the significance of Jesus's person and office is found in the name of 'Christ.' Dahl recognizes the tensions in the name-title debate and what is at stake for understanding Paul's Christology.

Andrew Chester takes a step further than Dahl, however. He is bolder in his argumentation, heightens the rhetoric, and concludes that there are very few messianic ideas within Paul's Christology. Chester does not focus just on the function of Χριστός in Paul and how Χριστός might function in the place as a name. He denies that Paul retains any titular sense in his use of 'Christ.' He, along with George MacRae, agree that Χριστός is used almost exclusively as a proper name and not as a title.²⁰ Furthermore, he states that the one reason why Paul uses 'Christ' so much in reference to Jesus is because of the fundamental belief that he and the early Christians had was that Jesus was the Messiah. He asks "why is so little meaning and content now attached to this fundamental datum of

¹⁸ Dahl, 16. "This does not exclude the possibility that the name "Christ" bears a fullness of meaning. However, the messiahship of Jesus is not stressed."

¹⁹ Ibid., 17. "The name 'Christ' has content: it connotes more of the nature and significance of Jesus. This is not, however to distinguish between the person and the office. Everything that Jesus is and does, he is and does as the Christ. In Paul the name 'Christ' is not a title to be detached from the person and work of Jesus Christ."

²⁰ Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation : Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 382. See also George Macrae, "Messiah and Gospel," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, ed., Jacob Neusner, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 170-171.

the faith?”²¹ James Dunn would suggest that the reason for this was because there was no longer much controversy over Jesus being the messiah at the time of Paul’s writing.²² Chester goes further and says that Χριστός and its meaning to be “smeared with oil” would not be impressive to most of Paul’s Gentile audiences.²³ He goes on to say that since Paul’s use of ‘Christ’ contains very little “that is distinctively messianic.”²⁴

There may be some middle ground in the debate, however. Douglas Moo recognizes an Old Testament, messianic sense in Paul’s writings, but overall, he views Χριστός as a name for Jesus.²⁵ Even though James Dunn agrees that Χριστός can, at times, retain its titular sense, he is persuaded that Χριστός functions more as a name than it does a title.²⁶ For Dunn, the Χριστός name-title distinction is based more on function rather than Christology. Because even though Dunn agrees with Dahl concerning Paul’s use of ‘Christ’ more as a name, he resists the conclusions of Dahl. Dunn concludes that Χριστός “had not entirely lost its titular significance for Paul”²⁷ Nevertheless, he still

²¹ Chester, 383.

²² Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 197.

²³ Chester, 383.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Douglas J. Moo, “The Christology of the Early Pauline Letters” in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. by Bruce Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 187.

²⁶ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 197-199.

²⁷ Ibid., 199.

resists recognizing the titular sense because the title functions as a name with barely any residual connotations associated with the title Χριστός.²⁸

It is clear that those who contend that Paul's use of Χριστός is merely a second name for Jesus are focused on the designation and identity of Jesus. Hengel does not pretend to think that Paul used 'Christ' arbitrarily and without meaning; instead, he believes Χριστός is fused with Jesus and that by the time Paul's missionary work began, Χριστός was a name for Jesus, associated with the saving power of Jesus by his death, resurrection, exaltation, and his parousia.²⁹ Dahl, Chester, and Hengel are looking for a way to denote Jesus and they miss the linguistic and theological connotations that were associated with Χριστός.³⁰

Matthew Novenson has become a helpful voice in the discussion of Paul's use of Χριστός as a name-title debate specifically, and messiah language more generally. Novenson is first concerned about retaining a messianic understanding of Χριστός for linguistic reasons. He states that if Paul did not mean "messiah" when he used Χριστός language, then it could be reasonable to conclude that, at least according to Paul, that Jesus is not the messiah.³¹ Novenson's premise is less concerned about the name-title debate specifically; instead, he resists the majority view that argues Χριστός has no

²⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays of James D. G. Dunn* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), accessed February 2, 2021, <https://covers.openlibrary.org/b/id/572634-M.jpg>, 214-215.

²⁹ Hengel, 76-77.

³⁰ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 68.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

messianic meaning in Pauline christological language.³² In more recent works, Novenson has suggested that messianism is not a concept that should be explored (at least primarily) historically, scientifically, or politically. Novenson argues that messianism is a grammar and it follows the behavior and pattern of languages.³³

First, Novenson seeks to reset the scholarly equilibrium in the discussion concerning messiah language in Paul by examining Dahl's four philological observations concerning Χριστός in the Pauline corpus. Dahl's first point, which is the basis of his defense of Χριστός as a name for Jesus, is that 'Christ' is never used in a general sense, but that it is always a designation for Jesus.³⁴ Novenson addresses Dahl's use of "general sense," or the appellative usage. Novenson defines "appellative" as a noun that applies to a class of people and not individuals.³⁵ Novenson counters Dahl's assessment by acknowledging it was certainly possible for Paul to have been familiar with an appellative use of Χριστός, but even if that was the case, that does not lead to the conclusion that Χριστός did not retain any of its messianic connotation when used in reference to Jesus.³⁶ Furthermore, he shows that titular forms can be applied to

³² Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 3.

³³ Matthew V. Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 21.

³⁴ Dahl, 15. Dahl acknowledges that in Acts 17:3 and 26:23 'Christ' is used as a genuine appellative.

³⁵ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 102.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

individuals without losing their titular meaning.³⁷ Novenson cites examples of “Augustus” as a honorific for the Roman emperor Octavian and Shimon bar Kosiba who held the honorific “Bar Kokhba” (son of the star).³⁸ Novenson contends that Χριστός can be classified as a honorific and that it behaves as such throughout the Pauline corpus.³⁹ Those who have accepted Dahl’s reasonings make the assumption that Χριστός only applied to Jesus (in Paul’s writings) and that the word loses its messianic sense. This is a linguistic problem for Novenson.⁴⁰

The second point in Dahl’s observations is that Χριστός is never used as a predicate and that Paul never says anything like “Jesus is the Christ.”⁴¹ Novenson is correct in his assessment that the reasoning behind this implies that since Paul never makes an affirmative statement “Jesus is the Christ” then Paul was not interested in Jesus’s messiahship.⁴² If Dahl, Hengel, and others are correct, then this drastically changes perceptions of Paul’s Christology.

Dahl’s use of “predicate” is misleading and imprecise. Novenson clarifies Dahl’s argument. He states that Dahl’s point uses “predicate” in the sense that Paul never makes

³⁷ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 103.

³⁸ Ibid., 91-96, 103.

³⁹ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 103.

⁴¹ Dahl, 15; Hengel, 67. Hengel states that Paul, in his letters, no longer had to affirm that Jesus is the Christ.

⁴² Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 105.

a logical and affirmative argument that Jesus is the messiah.⁴³ Dahl objects to Χριστός as a title because it is not found following the “to be” verb, εἰμί.⁴⁴ In fact, Novenson shows that Dahl’s objection is much more particular than he originally stated. Novenson supplies evidence from 1 Cor. 10:4 (“and the rock was Christ”) and Gal. 3:16 (“And to your seed,’ that is, Christ”) passages that Dahl recognizes where Χριστός is used in a predicate position following εἰμί and grants that Paul could be speaking in messianic terms and concepts, to get to the heart of the real objection. Novenson says that what Dahl and others really have in mind when basing their objections based on the predicate use of Χριστός is that Χριστός never is the predicate following the precise form of Ἰησοῦς (subject, ‘Jesus’), εἰμί (verb, ‘is’), Χριστός (predicate, ‘Christ’).⁴⁵ Novenson questions the necessity of such syntactical evidence as helpful or necessary in determining whether or not Paul did have messianic conceptions in his writings.⁴⁶

⁴³ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 105. Novenson cites several Pauline texts where Χριστός is found in the accusative case and is the direct object of a sentence, and therefore, it is in the predicate position. See Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 1:23; 10:9; 15:15; and Gal. 3:27 for a few examples.

⁴⁴ See Dahl, 17. Dahl does concede a few passages where Paul makes statements about “the Christ” as perhaps retaining a messianic sense (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:4; 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 1:10, 12, 20). Yet, he would argue that even in the most “messianic” text of Paul (Rom. 1:2-4), the lordship of Jesus is of greater importance than any messianic connotations.

⁴⁵ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 105.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 107.

Dahl's third philological observation of Paul's Χριστός usage is that a genitive is never added to it, especially with κυρίου or θεοῦ.⁴⁷ The New Testament does contain Χριστός language with possessive modifiers ("the Christ of God"), but it seems to be employed more by Luke than it does Paul.⁴⁸ Novenson makes the observation that Χριστός with a genitive modifier "is not a fixed feature of ancient Jewish messiah language generally."⁴⁹ He agrees that the genitive modifier is mostly absent in the Pauline corpus. However, Novenson shows 1 Cor. 3:23 and Paul's statement Χριστὸς δὲ θεοῦ ("Christ is God's") as a possible exception to Dahl's observation, although it is not without its own difficulty and it is not definitive.⁵⁰ Novenson provides other evidence where Χριστὸς is in the genitive case, showing Jesus's relationship with God.⁵¹ Novenson argues that to appeal to Paul's lack of a genitive modifier with Χριστὸς is confusing Luke's writings with Paul.

⁴⁷ Dahl, 15. He cites the a sentence that Paul never uses, "the Christ of God," as evidence.

⁴⁸ Luke 2:26 τὸν Χριστὸν κυρίου ("the Lord's Christ"); Acts 4:26 κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ κατὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ ("against the Lord and against his Christ")

⁴⁹ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 109.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 110. See Timothy A. Brookins, *1 Corinthians 1-9 : A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 91. The genitive is in the predicate of the sentence but it is a genitive of relationship; it is not in the attributive position.

⁵¹ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 110-111. See Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3.

Dahl's fourth and final philological observation involves the anarthrous Χριστὸς.⁵² Novenson acknowledges the rare usage in Paul's letters of a definite article before Χριστὸς.⁵³ The lack of the definite article is perhaps the most reasonable of reasons to deny Χριστὸς as a title in any form.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Paul does on rare occasion use the definite article prior to Χριστὸς, to which interpreters observe in defense of retaining messianic thought within Paul's writings. For Novenson's purposes, he is more interested in examining whether the use of the definite article is a definitive characteristic in messiah language.⁵⁵ Based on his findings, the definite article may be dropped while retaining a titular force; the use and presence of the definite article is inconclusive, as well as its absence.⁵⁶

Dahl's second and third philological observations he cites as reasons for not accepting Χριστός as a title with its messianic implications are especially troublesome. While the observations may be technically correct, insofar as they are presented, they are

⁵² Dahl, 16. He cites 1 Cor. 3:11 as an exception, according to the Textus Receptus. The NA28 does not include a definite article, only Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.

⁵³ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 111-112.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 112. He says, summarizing the arguments for Χριστὸς as a name based on the lack of the definite article: "The absence of the definite article implies the absence of titular significance for the word."

⁵⁵ Ibid., 113-115.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 114.

not definitive in the debate.⁵⁷ Dahl's findings are based on an assumption of how Paul should have expressed messianic ideas within his writings. Dahl's second and third observations are not genuine observations, but they are objections based on expectations and not empirical data. This is one reason why Novenson's work is so invaluable to the discussion of messianic language; he questions the assumptions behind Dahl's widely-accepted observations that have served as the standard for objecting to Paul's use of messianic conceptions in the epistles.

What is troubling to Novenson is Dahl's assessment about Paul's use of 'Christ.' Dahl states that "Paul's letters represent a strikingly advanced stage in the evolution that transformed *Christos* from a messianic designation to Jesus' second proper name."⁵⁸ If Dahl's conclusions are true, then Paul abandons the conventional use of Χριστός in order to adopt standard Christian vocabulary.⁵⁹ This is why Novenson argues that Paul's usage of Χριστός maintains the grammatical, linguistic, and conventional sense of the word. Paul did not solidify a new category of Χριστός. Instead, Paul's Χριστός is different in kind.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 115. "Dahl's four philological observations identify forms that, if present, would count as evidence of a messianic use of Χριστός. Their general absence from Pauline usage, then, is taken to count against messiahship in Paul's thought."

⁵⁸ Dahl, 18.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁰ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 97, 102.

Dahl represents the view that Χριστός became Paul's second proper name, but Hengel suggests that 'Jesus' was the real proper name and 'Christ' was the cognomen, or surname, and 'Lord' was the title given to Jesus.⁶¹ However, Novenson shows that single names were the standard for male and female Greek individuals and it is a pattern that Paul keeps throughout his writings.⁶² So if Paul did refer to Jesus with a real double name, then it would be an exception within the Pauline letters.⁶³

N. T. Wright does not accept the conclusions of those scholars who argue that Paul uses Χριστός as a name, devoid of its titular meaning and significance.⁶⁴ It is difficult to see any sort of messianism in Paul's writings because Jesus being the Messiah is an implicit, fundamental, and foundational principle that he does not extrapolate; Paul assumed Jesus's Messiahship since he was writing epistles to those who believed Jesus to be the Lord and Christ.⁶⁵ Yet, the Messiahship of Jesus is foundational to salvation according to other scholars. Betz argues that in Gal. 2:16, Paul uses Χριστός as a

⁶¹ Hengel, 68.

⁶² Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 73, 81-82. Paul names approximately 55 individuals in his letters and he uses a singular personal name for each of them. The one exception is with "Peter" and "Cephas" but he never combines the two, as in "Peter Cephas" or "Cephas Peter."

⁶³ Ibid., 80.

⁶⁴ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 1996), 486.

⁶⁵ N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Book II. Parts III and IV (Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2013), 824; Hengel, 67. Although Hengel uses Paul's lack of proof of Jesus as the Messiah to why Χριστός is a name for Jesus, as opposed to a title, Wright contends that Jesus' Messiahship is central and foundational to Paul's gospel. They both use the same evidence to come to opposing views.

messianic title and that through belief in Jesus as the Messiah, people are justified.⁶⁶

According to Betz, the content of a person's faith is actually in the acceptance of Jesus's Messiahship, or as he states believing that "the Christ is Jesus."⁶⁷ Therefore, the Messiahship of Jesus is critical to faith and justification. The significance of the title then becomes underwhelming for modern-day readers. Wright argues that titles are filled with connotations and expectations, whereas names denote and identify particular persons.⁶⁸ The pregnant meaning of the title is perhaps lost on modern readers and interpreters because the connotations and expectations that were in Paul's mind are not being articulated in a systematic fashion. The frequency in which Paul uses Χριστός in fact could be part of the problem. Because of the frequency at which he uses Χριστός, Paul could be considered the one New Testament author who is the most interested in Jesus as the Messiah.⁶⁹

This is why Novenson has sought to explain Paul's use of Χριστός as a honorific, which he believes Paul maintains the full linguistic meaning of messiah, even when he uses in conjunction with Ἰησοῦς. Hengel asserts that 'Christos' became a word with its own peculiarities — which is what Novenson questions — and he denies that Χριστός is

⁶⁶ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 117.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 824.

⁶⁹ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 64.

a honorific designation and title for Jesus.⁷⁰ Novenson contends that the honorific is the onomastic category that best defines Paul's use of Χριστός in the New Testament.⁷¹ The honorific would be a second illustrious name given to public figures, like kings.⁷² In Novenson's findings, honorifics can vary in how their placement in relation to the proper name, that is, the honorific can precede the proper name or it can follow the proper name.⁷³ Another critical point of contention for Novenson is that the honorific is distinct from the official title of 'king.'⁷⁴ Of particular interest in Jewish lore, Judah ben Matthias became a prominent figure during the revolt against the Syrians and he took the honorific Judah Maccabee, which means "hammer."⁷⁵ And during the period of the Second Jewish revolt against Rome, Shimon bar Kosiba took the honorific Shimon bar Kokhba ("son of the star").⁷⁶ Hengel acknowledges that these and similar titles were used in Jewish

⁷⁰ Hengel, 74.

⁷¹ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 87.

⁷² Ibid., 88. Novenson cites several well-known examples from Greek culture, such as Alexander III of Macedon who has been known as "Alexander the Great." The Seleucid kings in Syria followed suit by adding honorific designations to their name, like: Seleucus I the Victor; Antiochus I the Savior; Antiochus III the Great; and Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The Egyptian Ptolemys did the same: Ptolemy I the Savior; Ptolemy III the Benefactor; Ptolemy V Epiphanes; Ptolemy XIII the Father-loving God.

⁷³ Ibid., 88-89.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 89. Novenson shows Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Macc. 1:10) and Epiphanes Antiochus (Josephus, *J.W.* 5.460).

⁷⁵ Ibid., 90. This honorific was claimed because of the fame of his military prowess. However, he is never referred to as Maccabee Judah.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 91.

literature and they would take titles and transform them into proper names.⁷⁷ Novenson concludes that the honorific is not a proper name or a title of an office, but the honorific is an onomastic category from antiquity that Paul was operating from. It is clear that the honorific was a well-established linguistic category that conformed to its own criteria, often combined with an individual's proper name. Therefore, Novenson concludes that within the Pauline epistles, Paul designates Jesus with the honorific of Χριστός, yet this is not a new linguistic category that has developed and evolved to only be a second name for Jesus. Novenson contends that Paul does not abandon all messianic conceptions associated with Χριστός terminology. Instead his use of Χριστός differentiates Jesus among “messiahs,” elevating Jesus as a different kind of Christ. He maintains that answering the multivalent questions surrounding the Χριστός name-title debate cannot be reduced to a grammatical and linguistic issue; he maintains it is an exegetical issue.⁷⁸

To assume, as Dahl does, that Paul's Christology has no understanding nor basis in Jesus's messiahship is the fatal flaw in this discussion as to whether or not Χριστός is a name or a title. Pauline Christology is much deeper and more expansive that includes messianic associations with it, rather than setting them aside and ignoring those messianic expectations. It is also a mistake to think that by recognizing Χριστός as a title or honorific that it will do harm to the personal nature and identity of Jesus. In fact,

⁷⁷ Hengel, 75.

⁷⁸ Matthew V Novenson, “Can the Messiahship of Jesus Be Read off Paul's Grammar?: Nils Dahl's Criteria 50 Years Later,” *New Testament Studies* 56 (July 2010): 396–412, accessed January 23, 2021, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001789901&site=ehost-live>, 412. See also: Macrae, 169.

failing to recognize the subtlety of Paul's messiah language, our Christology may falter. It is through a recognition of Jesus's office and title that we can see the grand theme of God's Anointed One throughout Paul's letters.

Messiah Language and Shaping New Testament Christology

The benefit of Novenson's work is not exclusive to the Pauline corpus. His first objective was researching how messianism and its concepts were communicated in ancient Judaism and then he showed how Paul's Christology behaved in similar ways, at least linguistically. Messiahship is a difficult area of research because, as Novenson concludes, it "did not entail anything."⁷⁹ Novenson argues that Paul's use of messiah language is worthy of consideration and reflection on the messiah.⁸⁰ The reason, according to Novenson, that people have been resistant to seeing messiah language in Paul is because they have read his use of Χριστός as a personal name of Jesus and not as a honorific.⁸¹

Piecing together messianism from the Hebrew Bible presents its own difficulties.⁸² The wide range and use of messiah language within the culture of ancient Judaism and the lack of orthodoxy on the issue of messianism is what makes a systematic

⁷⁹ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 178.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 63.

⁸² Ibid., 47-53. Novenson appeals to the Jewish Scriptures as a primary source for observing the linguistic nature and function of 'messiah.'

and formulaic approach so difficult, and ultimately, impossible.⁸³ Novenson concludes, based on findings from William Scott Green, that it is impossible to come to a clear and concise answer as to what exactly messiah language involved because its linguistic use was so varied; hyperbolically, it was as if it meant nothing.⁸⁴ Yet, this does not mean messianic concepts were arbitrary and that interpreters could assign whatever meaning they so desired and attach it to messianic texts. Novenson borrows the phrase, “creatively biblical,” from Loren Stuckenbruck.⁸⁵ There are creative and unique explanations and thoughts associated with Jewish messianism, but those concepts also are based upon Jewish texts of Scripture, providing boundaries for the discussion. Novenson, in *The Grammar of Messianism*, states that there is no single messianic idea, but there is a mass of legend that surrounds discussions about the messiah.⁸⁶ The proper way to engage with messianic concepts is through exegesis of scriptural texts, as Novenson suggests.⁸⁷

The Hebrew word for messiah involved the concept of being anointed with oil, even if actually anointing a king or priest was an archaic practice by the time of the first

⁸³ John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Second edition. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 18.

⁸⁴ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 34.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁸⁶ Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism*, 275.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 274.

century C.E.⁸⁸ The Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (Messiah) means “anointed.”⁸⁹ BDB lists five categories of persons or offices in which Messiah is used in the Old Testament: the king of Israel (often with the Davidic dynasty attached), the high priest of Israel, Cyrus the Mede, the messianic prince, and patriarchs who were regarded as anointed kings.⁹⁰ Based upon these categories, messiah language is used in the Old Testament to speak of leaders of God’s people. Messianic associations were connected with the high priests who functioned as a religious leader in respect to sacrificial duties on the Day of Atonement and the kings who served as the political leaders for Israel.

John Collins offers this definition of messiah: “a figure who will play an authoritative role in the end time, usually the eschatological king.”⁹¹ Collins also acknowledges the close association between ‘messiah’ and the anointed High Priest.⁹² While a definition of ‘messiah’ can be helpful, it is likely best to look for repetitive patterns and associations with messianic expectations, rather than force a one-size-fits-all definition into all messianic texts.⁹³

⁸⁸ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 49-50.

⁸⁹ Brown, Francis, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs. *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 603. Brown-Driver-Briggs will be abbreviated to BDB.

⁹⁰ BDB, 603.

⁹¹ Collins, 16.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism*, 29. Novenson resisted the defining of the term messiah because his purpose was to look at behavior and patterns throughout messianic texts.

One of the struggles that comes with messianism, is that there was no uniform pattern of what the messiah was like. Some from the Qumran sect developed an expectation of two messiahs, one who would lead Israel politically and the other who would come from the priestly line of Aaron.⁹⁴ Collins, like Novenson, agrees that messianic language and concepts have to be spoken about in general terms because of the lack of a systematic way of discussing messianic convictions. Collins says that three major concepts and criteria are: the expectation of a Davidic king, an ideal priest, and an eschatological prophet.⁹⁵ Messianic connotations and expectations appear to not only come from the Jewish Scriptures, but the same passages were frequently cited as formulating different messianic concepts.⁹⁶ Although none of these passages explicitly use the Hebrew term for messiah, or the Greek equivalent Χριστός, they do share common themes that shaped discussions of messianism.⁹⁷ While not all Jews would have shared these messianic expectations, based on the critical passages of Scripture that Novenson shares, a few general observations help develop messianic expectations. First, the messiah is considered to be a ruler or king that would come from the line of Judah (Gen. 49:10), which would firmly place the messiah as a descendant of Abraham. Secondly, the messiah figure would be a strong ruler who would subdue Israel's enemies

⁹⁴ Collins, 79.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁹⁶ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 57. Novenson lists a few common messiah texts that are important for shaping messianic concepts: Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17; 2 Sam. 7:12-13; Isa. 11:1-2; Amos 9:11; and Dan. 7:13-14.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 58.

(Num. 24:17). Thirdly, the messiah would be a descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:12-13; Isa. 11:1-2). Fourth, the spirit of Yahweh would be with the messiah (Isa. 11:1-2). Fifth, the messiah would bring about restoration to Israel (Amos 9:11). Sixth, the messiah appears to be a heavenly being and would rule over God's kingdom (Dan. 7:13-14).⁹⁸ Most of these passages emphasize the kingly expectations that the messiah would fulfill. However, there are biblical grounds for the expectation of the king to also serve as priest, based on Zech. 6:12-13.⁹⁹ While various Jewish sects formulated their own writings and expectations, it appears that these texts served as a foundational source for all of them, providing some consistency to the discussion.¹⁰⁰

Like Novenson, Joshua Jipp has become an important voice in looking at messianic language in the New Testament. Jipp's work has focused on how Jesus is the idealistic royal king. It is within the person of Jesus as the Χριστός and Messiah of God that law and king are united to be the embodiment of law.¹⁰¹ Jipp shows that Jesus as the

⁹⁸ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 58; Collins, 195. Jesus quoted Dan. 7:13 when Caiaphas asked him if he was the Christ and Son of God. Jesus's affirmation of being the Son of Man from Daniel 7 directly led to his crucifixion.

⁹⁹ Collins, 36; See also: Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism*, 69-70. The Zechariah text contains possible scribal errors and has complicated interpretations of the text. But if this can be accepted as a messianic expectation for the same person holding two offices at the same time, then it supplies background to the book of Hebrews — clearly rooting the book of Hebrews in messianic discussions — with Jesus being the King-Priest from the order of Melchizedek.

¹⁰⁰ Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs*, 58-59.

¹⁰¹ Joshua Jipp, *Christ Is King: Paul's Royal Ideology* (Minneapolis: Fortress 2015), 60.

Messiah is invested with God's authority since he is a descendant of David and that he becomes a conduit for God's spirit within the kingdom, so he rules with righteousness and peace.¹⁰² The ideal king as presented in the Old Testament, especially in the psalms shows God's messiah as: the king as God's earthly representative who shares the throne and is God's son; the king is rescued from distress and is placed over his enemies; the king establishes a kingdom of righteousness.¹⁰³ Jipp is right in his assessment and amazement that in the presentation in Scripture of this royal, messianic figure, this king is certain to suffer persecution from enemies.¹⁰⁴ The apostles explained Jesus's death and crucifixion in these terms. In Acts 4:24-28, the apostles contextualize the death of Jesus within the expectations of Psalm 2 and the messiah's enemies lashing out against God and attacking God's anointed.¹⁰⁵ It is apparent that the New Testament Christology embraced the ideas of God's anointed king who would rule over the kingdom of God with righteousness, but that the messiah must overcome the distress of death.

The Christology of the New Testament involves associations with (but is not limited to) Jesus's lineage from Abraham and David, his channeling the Spirit of God,

¹⁰² Jipp, 34.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 35-36. Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 are especially formative in showing God inviting the anointed one to sit on the throne and rule over his enemies.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁵ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 256. "The prayer interprets Psalm 2 in terms of a review of history—the recent history of Herod and Pontius Pilate as those rulers who conspired against Jesus."

and crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation. All of these are important elements which play a part in Paul's identification and use of Χριστός as the Messiah and Anointed One of God. And the language of participation and union with Χριστός will involve a participation with Jesus as the crucified, resurrected, and exalted king and Messiah. Paul identifies the Christ and how believers must be crucified and raised, a participatory union with Jesus, in Gal. 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..."¹⁰⁶ We will now turn our attention to the explicit language of ἐν Χριστῷ to consider Paul's use of participatory language and whether or not he unites the ideas of the identity of Jesus with the benefits that come with being a Christian and member of the body of Christ.

¹⁰⁶ Paul (and all believers) must be crucified with Christ, which indicates some level of union with Jesus.

Chapter Two

Christ in Galatians: Paul's Use of "In Christ"

In the previous chapter, it was determined that Χριστός has special significance in the New Testament. Jesus is the Messiah, God's Anointed King, who died and was resurrected. The Messiahship of Jesus and his gospel brings about deliverance and atonement from sins (Gal. 1:4). Pauline theology is centered around God's activity through Jesus Christ, the Anointed. Therefore, when Paul defends justification by faith, he associates justification with faith in God's Χριστός. Jesus's Messiahship provides salvation and justification through participation ἐν Χριστῷ, which is central to the gospel Paul preached and defends in the epistle to the churches of Galatia.

Paul develops this idea that believers are "in Christ" at seven different points in the epistle of Galatians. This chapter will exegete Gal. 1:22; 2:4, 17; and 5:6 in the order that they appear in the epistle with a grammatical, historical, literary, and occasional method. Since context plays a crucial role in determining the interpretation of ἐν Χριστῷ, then interpreters must be aware of the unique features within the epistle even if Paul uses the same grammatical usage of the preposition ἐν plus dative use of Χριστός. Paul's uses ἐν Χριστῷ a total of seven times in the epistle to the Galatians. The first few instances are easily isolated and sporadic. However, Galatians chapter three uses ἐν Χριστῷ three times and within the closest proximity to each other. The use of ἐν Χριστῷ in Galatians chapter three will be examined in the third chapter of this paper.

**Gal. 1:22: ἤμην δὲ ἀγνοούμενος τῷ προσώπῳ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Ἰουδαίας ταῖς ἐν
Χριστῷ**

Galatians 1:22 is found in the middle of an autobiographical section where Paul defends his calling to preach the gospel and this serves as an important opening feature of the epistle to the churches of Galatia. He contends that the gospel he preaches was not taught to him from the apostles or other church leaders; instead he received the gospel through a revelation from Jesus (Gal. 1:11-12). It is possible that the Judaizing teachers were attempting to discredit Paul's gospel by spreading deceit among the churches of Galatia, saying that Paul was being unfaithful to the gospel the apostles had taught him.¹ Paul mentions his being ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ("in Judaism") in Gal. 1:13-14. Novenson suggests that Ἰουδαϊσμῷ is not how Paul would refer to the religious tradition of Israel at large; instead, Ἰουδαϊσμῷ is how Paul characterized his violent attacks against disciples and how he sought to destroy the gospel by persecuting the church of God.² "Judaism" was used in close association with nationalistic ideology and the defeat of any person, group, or nation that opposed the traditions of Jewish customs.³ As Longenecker observes, Paul denies that he was eager to preach a law-free gospel to the Gentiles; Paul

¹ Martyn, 169; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 26, 35. Longenecker states that the Judaizers were trying to show Paul as someone who was insubordinate to the apostles, deviating from the truth, and be independent of Jerusalem.

² Matthew V. Novenson, "Did Paul Abandon either Judaism or Monotheism?" in *The New Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, ed. Bruce Longenecker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 241-242; Keener, 79.

³ Dunn, *Galatians*, 56-57.

was a zealous observer and practitioner of the law insofar as he was willing to lead a persecution against those in the church.⁴ Paul abandoned nationalistic Judaism that would lead a persecution against Christians. Instead, he would re-orient himself and his beliefs to be on Christ. He became what could be described as a “new covenant Jew” — a Jew who saw how God faithfully accomplished the purposes of the first covenant and how Christ set forth a new covenant.⁵ God called and appointed Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16) to which Paul was obedient. Paul then states that he went away to Arabia, then returned to Damascus, and finally he came back to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:17-18). Paul’s travel timeline is difficult to relate to the book of Acts, but in Galatians, the point Paul makes is clear: he did not learn the gospel from other people and the source of the gospel was never Jerusalem.

The final section of Gal. 1 is found in verses 18-24 and Paul continues to address the unsubstantiated rumors that Paul received the gospel from the apostles in Jerusalem. He says that when he finally went to Jerusalem it was only for a short time. The only apostles he saw were Cephas and James, the Lord’s brother (Gal. 1:18-19). Paul then left the city of Jerusalem and the Judean province (Gal. 1:21). He strengthens his argument by saying he was ἀγνοούμενος τῷ προσώπῳ (“unknown by face”) among the churches of Judea. This statement has not been without controversy for a couple of reasons: first, Paul

⁴ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 26.

⁵ Brant Pitre, Michael P. Barber, and John A. Kincaid, *Paul: A New Covenant Jew, Rethinking Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 38-62; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 122-123.

had been a persecutor of the church; second, Luke tells of Paul coming to Jerusalem, having fellowship with the disciples there, and when learning of a plot to kill him, they sent him away safely (Acts 9:26-31). Craig Keener describes the problem in this way: “Moreover, he cannot mean that no one would have recognized him, since he was in Jerusalem in 1:18-19 and had to pass through parts of Judea to reach it and to leave it.”⁶ DeSilva warns against pressing Paul’s statement too far in an overly literal way.⁷ Some interpreters propose a helpful solution that by showing Paul’s phrase is a locution for “personally,” i.e., that the churches of Judea do not know Paul personally.⁸ Ben Witherington suggests that Paul’s persecution against the church was localized to Jerusalem and that after Paul’s conversion there likely was church expansion.⁹ Church growth after Paul’s conversion could account for why some disciples would not have

⁶ Keener, 105.

⁷ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 167.

⁸ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 41; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 166; DeSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 22. This is a helpful explanation, since Paul could have been recognized by some people and his reputation of the persecutor-turned-preacher. What he once tried to destroy had been growing. Paul certainly had connections to Jerusalem and the Judean area. But Paul’s point is that the churches of Judea do not know him with any sort of personal relationship; they have only heard about him or been acquaintances with him on one very brief occasion (Gal. 1:18-19).

⁹ Witherington, 124. As evidence of church expansion in Judea, he points to Paul’s singular use of ἐκκλησία in 1:13 the plural usage in 1:22. While Witherington’s point is possible, the switch Paul makes from singular to plural use of ἐκκλησία is not convincing. According to Luke, after the stoning of Stephen and the beginning of Saul’s persecution, the Jerusalem church was scattered and other churches were established during that time (Antioch of Syria, Acts 11:19-30). Church expansion appears to be concurrent with Saul’s persecution.

recognized Paul by his face, since the only interaction they might have had with Paul was indirectly and through his reputation.

Even though Paul has a deep range of theological terminology and concepts associated with ἐν Χριστῷ, his use of ἐν Χριστῷ in Gal. 1:22 is underwhelming at first glance. James Dunn acknowledges Paul's typical theological use of ἐν Χριστῷ as an expression of participation with Christ, yet he says that Paul is inexplicit with that theological and Christological use in this verse.¹⁰ Galatians 1:22 bears a close resemblance to 1 Thess. 2:14 and the description of the churches of Judea as "of God" and "in Christ Jesus," particularly with the ἐν plus dative use of Χριστός.¹¹ Even though Dunn states that Paul uses ἐν Χριστῷ in a formulaic sense, and that Χριστῷ functions as a name for Jesus and not in the titular fashion to refer to the Messiah, he recognizes a more important function that ἐν Χριστῷ might possibly have in this passage.¹² David DeSilva agrees with Dunn by arguing that Gal. 1:22's use of ἐν Χριστῷ sets up further uses that will become increasingly more important, especially in Galatians chapter three.¹³

¹⁰ James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 82-83.

¹¹ 1 Thess. 2:14 ...τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν οὐσῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ...

¹² Dunn, *Galatians*, 82.

¹³ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 166.

Dunn argues that Paul uses “in Christ” as a contrast with his having been “in Judaism,” the nationalistic ideology that Paul had adopted in defense of the Jewish traditions (Gal. 1:13-14).¹⁴ He shows that Paul uses ἐν Χριστῷ in Galatians to express:

1. the freedom Christ offers (2:4),
2. justification that is found in Christ (2:17),
3. and now because of Christ the indifference God has toward circumcision and uncircumcision (5:6).¹⁵

Dunn concludes that ἐν Χριστῷ functions as an identifying characteristic, as opposed to their Jewishness which associated them with Torah observance.¹⁶ Other Pauline interpreters argue that ἐν Χριστῷ simply should be understood as a description of the kind of congregations to which Paul is referring, namely, these are Christian gatherings.¹⁷ While this is a legitimate possibility for translations and interpreters, it appears that there is more substantively going on with Paul’s use of ἐν Χριστῷ.¹⁸

¹⁴ Dunn, *Galatians*, 82.

¹⁵ Dunn, *Galatians*, 82.

¹⁶ Ibid., 83.

¹⁷ Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, 33 (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 63; Campbell, 124. The REB translates this as the “Christian congregations in Judea.”

¹⁸ Schreiner, 112; Dunn, *Galatians*, 83.

J. Louis Martyn suggests “in Christ” is a spatial category that Paul is developing.¹⁹ The basis of his argument is on the fact that Paul refers to these churches in geographical terms. Yet, being “in Christ” means that God’s people are no longer distinguished based on geography or ethnicity. They are now in a new realm, the realm of God through Christ and even though the churches are geographically in Judea, “they are more importantly located in Christ.”²⁰ Witherington agrees that Paul uses ἐν Χριστῷ in a locative way by a way of contrasting with being “in Judaism.”²¹

Other scholars describe a local, spatial, and spherical nature to Paul’s usage of “in Christ” in terms of relationship and belonging to Christ.²² Burton says that the use of the preposition ἐν shows fellowship between the churches and the risen Christ.²³ DeSilva agrees with Martyn and Dunn that ἐν Χριστῷ functions to establish the contrast between Christ and Torah throughout Galatians. DeSilva argues that “in Christ” is used to establish a kind of intimate relationship, including behavioral implications, that the churches have with Jesus in contrast to being under the law.²⁴ DeSilva also observes that even though Paul refers to the congregations in Judea with these congregations being the

¹⁹ Martyn, 176.

²⁰ Martyn, 176.

²¹ Witherington, 125. The basis of social constructs is no longer determined by circumcision or by the law, but by being “in Christ.”

²² Longenecker, *Galatians*, 41; Matera, 67

²³ Burton, 63.

²⁴ DeSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 22.

possible source of Judaizers and the growing anti-Paul sentiment, Paul still acknowledges that these churches are “in Christ.”²⁵

In light of the context of Galatians, Paul’s description of the churches of Judea as being ἐν Χριστῷ appears to be a preparatory statement for distinguishing those who belong to Christ from those Christians who remain under the law. Also, implied within Paul’s use of ἐν Χριστῷ is the incorporated sense of those who belong to Christ, are in Christ, and they express their union with Christ by being in Christ’s congregations. N. T. Wright contends that Χριστός must bear its titular meaning because of this incorporative sense of Christ followers being in churches and being described as “in Christ.”²⁶

Longenecker agrees that ἐν Χριστῷ is a designation for the groups of Christians in Judea, reminding readers that they all share, in an incorporated way, a relationship with the risen Christ.²⁷ Yet, the very occasion for Paul’s writing the epistle shows that some are jeopardizing that relationship with Christ. Paul uses strong terms, describing them as those who have deserted the truth of the gospel (Gal. 1:6-9) and who have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4). Based upon the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, Paul goes so far as to say that any who are demanding works of the Law to be kept for justification must be cast out (Gal. 4:30), just as Hagar had been cast out of the family of Abraham.

The second use of ἐν Χριστῷ in Paul’s letter to the Galatians is found in Gal. 2:4.

²⁵ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 166.

²⁶ Wright, *Climax*, 46. Wright argues that Χριστός often connotes — and even denotes — the whole people that the Messiah represents as king.

²⁷ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 41; Burton, 63.

**Gal. 2:4 διὰ δὲ τοὺς παρεισάκτους ψευδαδέλφους, οἵτινες παρεισῆλθον
κατασκοπήσαι τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἡμῶν ἣν ἔχομεν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα ἡμᾶς
καταδουλώσουσιν,**

Paul expresses one of the benefits possessed by those who are ἐν Χριστῷ — freedom — and how it has come to be attacked by the Judaizing element in the churches. Freedom for the Gentile Christians, who are ἐν Χριστῷ, removes the requirement of keeping circumcision and other works of the Law for justification.²⁸ Galatians chapter two continues the autobiographical section in the epistle, so he does not go into a thorough treatise of freedom in Christ, but he is anticipating a large theme that will be found in the rest of the epistle and how those who have faith in Christ will be released from the bondage of the Law (Gal. 4:1-5:13).²⁹ And even though it is secondary to the main point and a subtle acknowledgment, Paul might be showing his solidarity with Gentile believers by stating the freedom is that which “we” have.³⁰ Since the freedom that Paul speaks of is found in Christ, it has led many interpreters to argue that Paul uses the preposition ἐν in a causal way.³¹ Matera argues that the freedom is received from

²⁸ Witherington, 137.

²⁹ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 178.

³⁰ Matera, 75; Campbell, 81. The plural pronoun “we” would include Paul with the Gentiles in churches of Galatia.

³¹ Burton, 83; Matera, 75. Also see DeSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 27. DeSilva says this reading of ἐν Χριστῷ is possible and that Paul could be indicating that Christ is the cause or basis of freedom. Also see the 9th definition of ἐν in BDAG, 329.

Christ's faith and faith in Christ.³² The freedom that Jew and Gentiles receive in Christ is "by virtue of our union with Christ."³³ Longenecker argues that 2:4 is an example of the instrumental function of the preposition insofar as freedom is the result of Christ's work in the lives of believers. Yet, he also contends that Paul uses ἐν Χριστῷ in a locative way and that believers are brought into personal union with Christ.³⁴

Nevertheless, the preposition ἐν is difficult to determine a precise meaning because of its variegated usages as was observed in the Introduction to this paper. Paul's use of the preposition is no exception to that rule and it is for this reason that it is difficult to catalogue Paul's usage of ἐν Χριστῷ in fixed categories. Constantine Campbell observes the elusive nature of ἐν and the problems it poses for interpreters, especially in connection with the theme of participation with Christ.³⁵

Campbell forcefully points to the context of Galatians chapter two and observes that Paul's argument is about the freedom that is found in Christ and how the redeeming work of Christ is not primarily in view.³⁶ He correctly argues that it's not the activity of

³² Matera, 75.

³³ Burton, 83. Burton here stresses the instrumental function, i.e., "by Christ."

³⁴ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 52. "Freedom for Paul results from both what Christ effects in our lives (instrumentality) and our being brought into personal union with Christ (locality)"

³⁵ Campbell, 73.

³⁶ Ibid., 81. He does not deny that Christ's redeeming activity has resulted in freedom, but he goes to great extremes to express that Paul's use of ἐν Χριστῷ here should not mix the instrument and the results.

achieving liberty that Paul has in mind, which would force readers to conclude that the instrumental, causal, and agency explanations of ἐν Χριστῷ are inadequate.³⁷ The ἐν plus dative use of Χριστός most often has the meaning of sphere and location.³⁸ Campbell takes issue, in particular, with Longenecker's explanation of ἐν Χριστῷ serving two different functions, both instrumental and local.³⁹ While there is little possibility of the preposition plus dative (ἐν Χριστῷ) serving two different functions in one passage, determining which function is best assigned is extremely challenging.⁴⁰ Determining the precise meaning of Paul's use of ἐν Χριστῷ "utterly defies definite interpretation."⁴¹

Campbell is not wrong for questioning Longenecker's assignment of ἐν Χριστῷ with two different functions. However, Longenecker does not make a strict linguistic-grammatical argument. Longenecker makes a theological and thematic argument. He says, concerning ἐν Χριστῷ, "it connotes both instrumentality...and locality..."⁴² Longenecker's explanation is based on connotations, general associations, and theological truths of Paul's use of "in Christ." And Campbell acknowledges the general

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Wallace, 175.

³⁹ Campbell, 81, f.n. 46. Campbell attempts to make a linguistic argument on ἐν Χριστῷ. He is careful to state that he is not denying a theological truth that Christ is the instrument and means by which freedom is granted to believers.

⁴⁰ Wallace, 175.

⁴¹ Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 118.

⁴² Longenecker, *Galatians*, 52.

truth to which Longenecker's view supports and appears to agree with Longenecker.⁴³

Longenecker and Campbell are not as far apart as Campbell seems to think they are.

"In Christ" is first usually considered to mean having a close association and relationship with Christ.⁴⁴ However, Campbell believes that Paul's tendency is to use "in Christ" in a spatial and locative sense and ought to be the starting point in interpretative decisions.⁴⁵ He does cite several Pauline passages where "in Christ" appears to have an instrumental usage (Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 1:2, 4; 2 Cor. 5:19; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:3; 2:10; 2 Tim. 1:9).⁴⁶ He believes Gal. 2:4 is an exception to the instrumental usage and conforms more with the normative, spatial usage of ἐν Χριστῷ.⁴⁷ Campbell is correct, I believe, because the context of Galatians chapter two contrasts liberty with bondage and freedom is found in Christ's realm and dominion.⁴⁸ Campbell argues for a locative use of ἐν because believers have been transferred into a new realm and location in Christ.⁴⁹

The next use of ἐν Χριστῷ is found in Gal. 2:17.

⁴³ Campbell, 81, f.n. 46. "This is not to say, of course, that from a theological perspective the instrumentality of Christ may be included alongside a locative sense, together with several other facets of union with Christ."

⁴⁴ BDAG, 327.

⁴⁵ Campbell, 73.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 94.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 73, 94.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

**Gal. 2:17 εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοί,
ἄρα Χριστὸς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος; μὴ γένοιτο.**

Galatians 2:15-21 serve rhetorically as Paul's *propositio* in which he recapitulates what he has said prior and foreshadows what he will be arguing throughout the letter.⁵⁰ Verse 17 is considered by many scholars to be a hypothetical statement in which Paul anticipates objections to his message of justification by faith apart from the works of the Law for Gentiles.⁵¹ Paul is treating the implications involved with the whole system of justification by faith.⁵²

Up to this point, deciphering the usage of ἐν Χριστῷ has gone with little debate, but Paul's usage in Gal. 2:17 might be one of the most divided throughout the epistle. And as has been true in other verses, determining the function of the preposition ἐν is the source of scholarly debate. Several scholars attempt to retain what is considered Paul's primary usage of ἐν Χριστῷ, reading the phrase with its spatial and local meaning.⁵³ Yet others, who might prefer a spatial interpretation of ἐν Χριστῷ, argue for Paul using "in

⁵⁰ Matera, 98; Betz, 114.

⁵¹ Betz, 119; Matera, 98; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 88-90; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 242-244.

⁵² Betz, 119-120; Matera, 95. As Betz points out, the whole system of justification by faith is at stake since justification is on the basis of faith in Christ for both Jews and Gentiles.

⁵³ Matera, 95; Moo, 165; Schreiner, 168; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 244.

Christ” as a means of expressing instrumentality and agency.⁵⁴ In strict grammatical terms, either reading is possible.⁵⁵

Scholars who prefer the spatial meaning of ἐν Χριστῷ in this verse appeal to Paul’s further argument in 2:19-20, particularly the description of Paul’s life with God expressed in terms of “Christ lives in me.”⁵⁶ Even Paul’s view of himself and his life with God is understood in a qualitatively different way because of Christ.⁵⁷ Matera contends that the language of justification involves more than a decision of acquittal; it also involves the transfer from the realm of Torah to the realm of Christ.⁵⁸ DeSilva also appeals to the language of ἐν Χριστῷ that is further into the epistle, such as in 3:27 and the connection of baptism and being clothed with Christ, giving new existence and associations for the believer.⁵⁹ Paul’s use of ἐν Χριστῷ could aptly be described as a holistic summary of Paul’s gospel and justification by faith.⁶⁰ And as Moo concludes, “Justification takes place as believers are incorporated into Christ...”⁶¹

⁵⁴ Burton, 124; Longenecker, 89; Burton, 124; Campbell, 114-15.

⁵⁵ DeSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 45.

⁵⁶ Dunn, *Galatians*, 82. Dunn acknowledges the difficulty in denying a spatial and locative meaning of ἐν Χριστῷ within Paul.

⁵⁷ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 244.

⁵⁸ Matera, 95.

⁵⁹ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 244.

⁶⁰ Dunn, *Galatians*, 141.

⁶¹ Moo, 165.

The normative function of ἐν Χριστῷ within Paul's letters is recognized as a shorthand expression for belonging to being in union with Christ.⁶² Nevertheless, some scholars prefer to interpret ἐν Χριστῷ with an instrumental meaning as in "by Christ."⁶³ Longenecker appears to be driven by the theological truth that Christ is the means by which justification is achieved. Campbell also breaks from what he considers to be the normal Pauline usage of spherical meaning and he argues for reading ἐν Χριστῷ with a causal sense because of the direct connection with justification.⁶⁴ DeSilva suggests that association and union with Christ could be under consideration, as well as Christ as the basis or cause of justification.⁶⁵

Burton offers a strong exegetical argument, in my opinion, for the instrumental usage of the preposition. He explains Paul's use of ἐν Χριστῷ in the present passage with the instrumental sense despite its usual meaning of intimacy of relationship and union between Christ and the believer.⁶⁶ The reason he argues for the instrumental sense is because of the proximity of δικαιόω with ἐν, which, as he explains, gives a contextual reason for the instrumental usage of the preposition. He points to other passages in the

⁶² BDAG, 327.

⁶³ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 89.

⁶⁴ Campbell, 114-115.

⁶⁵ DeSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 45.

⁶⁶ Burton, 124.

Pauline corpus, particularly in Galatians and Romans, where the preposition ἐν is translated with the instrumental understanding.⁶⁷

Deciding whether Paul uses ἐν Χριστῷ with an instrumental understanding in which Christ is the agent of justification or preferring a spatial interpretation of ἐν Χριστῷ is extremely challenging. Both interpretations look to the context of Gal. 2:15-21 for support. Since Paul speaks clearly of “Christ living in me” in 2:19-20, union, participation, and association with Christ are themes within the passage. Nevertheless, justification is certainly in view within the close context of 2:16-17, with the language of instrumentality of faith in Jesus being associated with justification, especially in 2:16. While both, spherical and instrumental readings are theologically true, the answer to the exegetical conundrum rests upon Paul’s primary use of language in 2:17. While it is true that the language of union is explicit in 2:19-20, in 2:17 it is probably best to read ἐν Χριστῷ with an instrumental understanding. In 2:17, it does not appear that Paul is thinking of a realm or location where believers are with Christ in a relational way. Instead, Paul’s emphasis is about the means of “seeking justification in Christ,” or by Christ. Another way of stating this is that Paul is not explaining how a person has union with Christ apart from discussions of justification; he is explaining how justification is in Christ and apart from the Law of Moses. Therefore, the close association of ἐν Χριστῷ with δικαιόω that Campbell, Burton, and Longenecker show is the reason it is best to read 2:17 with the instrumental meaning as its primary one. And while it is best to not conflate

⁶⁷ Burton shows specific instances in Gal. 3:11; Rom. 3:24; 5:9; and Acts 13:39 where δικαιόω and ἐν are used together and ἐν is translated with the understanding of agency and instrumentality.

definitions and usages of ἐν, it should also be noted that a preference toward the instrumental reading of ἐν Χριστῷ would not exclude the locative ideas of union and participation that might be expressed in the same phrase. The agency of Christ is what makes the union with him possible. Keener describes union with Christ in terms of a person being suffused with Christ by God's Spirit and that believers are transformed into the image of Christ.⁶⁸ He says this is beyond a mere relationship with Christ, but that union with Christ involves intimacy through the continuous internal presence.⁶⁹

The final use of ἐν Χριστῷ in the letter is used in Galatians chapter five.

Gal. 5:6 ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη.

Paul's last use of ἐν Χριστῷ appears in Gal. 5:6, which serves as a summary of Paul's argument of the *propositio* (2:15-21) and *probatio* (3:1-4:11).⁷⁰ Longenecker and other scholars argue that ἐν Χριστῷ functions as a reminder of the themes of unity, faith, and adoption in the family of Abraham.⁷¹ Since ἐν Χριστῷ appears to recall the associations of faith and adoption, it serves as a reminder how people were united with

⁶⁸ Keener, 198.

⁶⁹ Ibid. See also: John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, (1548; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 74.

⁷⁰ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 229. He points to Paul's double use of γὰρ in 5:5-6 as grammatical evidence to read this section as a summary of what Paul has said earlier and as a way to move to a discussion of Christian behavior.

⁷¹ Ibid.; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 424; Betz, 262-263.

Christ in baptism (Gal. 3:27).⁷² It is “in Christ” that believers in Jesus are incorporated into the family of Abraham, apart from the law.⁷³ The language of incorporation, justification, and adoption point to an understanding of ἐν Χριστῷ as the realm of Christ’s rule where justification is by grace through faith and apart from circumcision.⁷⁴ Paul’s point is that circumcision or uncircumcision have no power to accomplish anything and they are without a theological foundation; what matters is that people are “in Christ.”⁷⁵

While the majority of scholars believe ἐν Χριστῷ here is Paul’s shorthand for expressing the ideas of new creation, faith, justification, adoption, hope, and incorporation into a unified group, Burton wrongly argues for a causal understanding of ἐν Χριστῷ.⁷⁶ He also argues ἐν Χριστῷ should be translated in an adjectival way, such as, “in Christianity” or “on the Christian basis.”⁷⁷ Campbell refutes Burton’s view by showing Paul’s emphasis is on the freedom and new status as new creatures that believers have.⁷⁸ He continues to show that Paul’s argument in Gal. 5:1-6 is that since believers

⁷² DeSilva, *Galatians*, 424.

⁷³ Matera, 188.

⁷⁴ Martyn, 472; Matera, 182; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 424; Moo, 330; Campbell, 145. Most scholars believe ἐν Χριστῷ has locative, spherical, and even relational meaning here.

⁷⁵ Betz, 262-263.

⁷⁶ Burton, 279. See also: DeSilva, 424; Moo, 330; Dunn, 270; Betz, 263-264; Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 228.

⁷⁷ Burton, 279.

⁷⁸ Campbell, 145.

have this newfound liberty then the need for circumcision is eliminated, and whether a male is circumcised or uncircumcised is irrelevant. Believers only find liberty “in Christ,” the realm and sphere of Christ. Being a new creation is found “in Christ” — not outside of Christ. Debates about the benefit of circumcision or uncircumcision do not profit anyone. What really matters is the effective and active demonstration of faith and love that matters from those who are set free⁷⁹.

Dunn believes being “in Christ” is a dynamic relationship that involves the energizing activities of faith and love; he cautions against thinking of ἐν Χριστῷ as a status or static relationship that is reduced to inactivity.⁸⁰ He continues by stating, “This verse provides a basis for response to any criticism of Paul’s view of justification by faith—that it encouraged a passive quietism, an inactivism, or even antinomianism (Rom. 3:8; 6:1). On the contrary, Paul understood ‘in Christ’ as a new and living relationship active in well doing (see also 6:15).”⁸¹ According to Dunn, justification is found in Christ and it is a relationship with Christ that is sustained by faith and love for others.⁸² As Dunn and

⁷⁹ Campbell, 145.

⁸⁰ Dunn, *Galatians*, 272. See DeSilva, *Galatians*, 431. “Attempts to isolate the point of justification in a particular transactional moment with the analytic precision of Aristotelian logic...threaten to obscure Paul’s deeply dynamic and relational understanding of how God was at work setting things right in God’s creation, and thus his understanding of both ‘grace’ and ‘faith.’”

⁸¹ Dunn, *Galatians*, 272. See also: Barclay, 94; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 425. Barclay makes it especially clear that faith and love are to be expressed through work, but not through works of the law and Torah observance. Paul’s letter to the Galatians does not encourage an inactive faith.

⁸² Dunn, *Galatians*, 272.

Betz both show, faith and love cannot be separated into categories of theory and practice.⁸³ Therefore, being ἐν Χριστῷ is a saving and transformative experience in which the believer is justified and energized to a life of good works, expressed through faith and love.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Paul did not despise the Law. On the contrary, he saw a lot of benefits from the Law, but he was opposed for depending on the Law for justification, honor, zeal, or as meritorious achievement.⁸⁵ When we consider Paul as a “new covenant Jew” then we can see continuity and discontinuity between the Law of Moses and the Gospel. Justification is centered in Christ, apart from works of the Law, but faith and love ultimately fulfill the requirements of the Law (Gal. 5:14; cf. Lev. 19:18).

Summary

It has quickly become evident that ἐν Χριστῷ does not function in a strict formulaic fashion. Paul’s meaning may emphasize various subtleties based on the particular context of its usage and there may be overlapping meanings as well.⁸⁶ So far within the letter of Galatians “in Christ” may be used with at least three distinct, but

⁸³ Betz, 264; Dunn, *Galatians*, 272. See Moo, 330-331 who argues that faith and works are separated, but inseparable.

⁸⁴ This verse has played a critical role in shaping the debate between Reformed views and Roman Catholic views on the nature of justification, faith, and works. Moo, *Galatians*, 331 quotes Calvin in a defense of maintaining the connectedness-yet-separated concepts of faith and works. Calvin’s quote does not deny the necessity of good works in a Christian’s life. For Calvin, his contention was that justification was by faith alone. If Dunn and others are right, then the holistic nature and all-encompassing use of ἐν Χριστῷ in Gal. 5:6 might be helpful in approaching this old debate in a fresh way.

⁸⁵ Keener, 274.

⁸⁶ Campbell, 73.

related uses. First, ἐν Χριστῷ may carry a sense of incorporation in the sphere and realm of Christ (1:22; 2:4; 5:6). Secondly, it may be used to show instrumentality and agency (2:17). Others have suggested that ἐν Χριστῷ may be an adjectival descriptor, but this is not widely accepted (5:6).⁸⁷ In chapter four of this paper, we will make theological observations and conclusions based on these usages. However, there are there three more instances of ἐν Χριστῷ in Galatians, which must be examined first.

⁸⁷ Burton, 279.

Chapter Three

Christ In Galatians: Promises and Blessings “in Christ”

Paul’s use of ἐν Χριστῷ appears to be sporadic at best, or insignificant at worst, based upon the evidence that has been examined so far. However, ἐν Χριστῷ appears three times within 14 verses, two occasions which are in rapid succession separated by only one verse (3:26, 28). Galatians chapter three is the most dense use of ἐν Χριστῷ in the entire letter and it also sheds an enormous amount of light in understanding Paul’s theological understanding to be “in Christ.”

Galatians 3:14 ἵνα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ γένηται ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος λάβωμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.

Paul demonstrates how God justifies those who believe, just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness (3:6). Paul shows that Christ is the connecting piece between Abraham and the inclusion of Gentile Christians, while also showing that faith is the requirement for justification, and not the works of the Law as the Judaizers want to require.¹ Martyn suggests that 3:14 is a reprise of 3:2, with another reprise in 4:6, that associates the receiving of the Spirit with the faith that comes from hearing the proclamation of Christ’s death and crucifixion, which further solidifies Paul’s point that faith and the Spirit did not come through observing the works of the Law.²

¹ Keener, 223; Betz, 141; DeSilva, 280-281; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 123.

² Martyn, 322.

Martyn shows Paul's use of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦς indicates participation. Gentiles receive the εὐλογία τοῦ Ἀβραάμ ("blessing of Abraham) and the ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος ("promise of the Spirit") came to believers who are alive to God and are in Christ.³

Whether or not ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦς functions in an instrumental fashion or in a locative sense is difficult to determine in 3:14.⁴ Given the difficulty of determining the use of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦς, the majority of scholarship leans towards the understanding that the language conveys instrumentality and agency.⁵ This is an exegetical possibility since Christ is the only agent being referred to in 3:10-14.⁶ It is Christ who provides redemption from the curse of the law through his crucifixion (3:13). Therefore, Paul could be saying that since it is Christ who has removed the curse, he also enables the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit to be given to the Gentiles⁷. Nevertheless, some scholars believe the locative meaning of "in Christ Jesus" is in view

³ Martyn, 322. He cites Gal. 2:19 and 3:27 as evidence for participatory language. In 2:19, believers have life in God, being dead to the Law. And in 3:27 believers who are immersed participate in the crucifixion of Christ

⁴ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 304; DeSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 64.

⁵ Betz, 152; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 123; Burton, 175-176; Campbell, 82; Barclay, 89.

⁶ Campbell, 82.

⁷ Barclay, 89; Campbell, 82; Burton, 175-176. Christ is the cause for the blessing of Abraham to be given to the Gentiles, allowing all people who believe to become a part of God's eternal purpose and plan to justify people by faith.

here.⁸ If Paul means the locative sense of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in the passage, to which I am inclined to believe, then it is διὰ τῆς πίστεως (“through faith”) in the redemptive death of Christ that places someone in the realm of Christ and there they receive the blessing and promise from God.⁹ Assuming a locative function of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, participation “in Christ” is the means of receiving the blessing of Abraham.¹⁰ Since Christ was the seed of Abraham (3:16) by which all nations would be blessed, recipients of the blessing and promise must be in Christ and in Abraham. Believers must participate in Christ if they will receive the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit.

There are two parallel clauses in Gal. 3:14: εὐλογία τοῦ Ἀβραάμ (“the blessing of Abraham”) and ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος (“promise of the Spirit”).¹¹ The themes of blessing through Abraham and the reception of the Spirit have been intertwined throughout Gal. 3. While these two clauses are parallel, Betz contends that the promise of the Spirit is predicated upon the Gentiles having received the blessing of Abraham, whereas others argue that the two clauses are parallel and that the “blessing” and the

⁸ Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 215; Moo, 214-215.

⁹ Moo, 214-215. Moo argues that 3:26 echoes 3:14, which would support an understanding of “in Christ” as the locative sphere and faith as the means of receiving the blessing and promise.

¹⁰ Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 180-181.

¹¹ Bruce, 167; Matera, 124; Betz, 152-153.

“Spirit” refer to the same thing.¹² One of Paul’s objectives in Gal. 3 is to show that the reception of the Spirit came through the proclamation of the gospel (3:2). The Galatians were never justified by keeping the works of the Law; their justification was by faith in the gospel. Paul shows that their justification is by faith, just as Abraham was made righteous by faith (3:6). The εὐλογία (3:14; “blessing”) of Abraham is based upon God’s promise to Abraham that all nations would be ἐνευλογηθήσονται (3:8; “will be blessed”) in him.¹³ All those who have faith like Abraham are εὐλογοῦνται (3:9; “blessed”) with Abraham. Those who have faith share in the same kind of faith as Abraham. Those who have received the blessing of Abraham also receive the promise of the Spirit, which is exactly where Paul began in 3:2. Of particular importance for Paul’s argument is that Gentiles have believed like Abraham, so they have received the blessing of Abraham and the promise of the Spirit — not through observance of the Law, but by faith.¹⁴ Abraham and the people of faith receive the blessing of Abraham and become descendants of

¹² Betz, 152 makes a case for the blessing of Abraham being foundational yet distinct from the promise of the Spirit. For those who argue that they are essentially the same thing see Moo, 214; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 123; de Boer, 214; Fung, 151-152; Schreiner, 219. Schreiner believes Paul alludes to Isa. 44:3 where “blessing” and the pouring out of the “Spirit” are parallel to one another.

¹³ Campbell, 82; Barclay, 89. Not only is there a strong connection between 3:8 and 3:14 based on the use of “blessing,” Barclay shows the possible correlation in 3:8 ἐν σοὶ (“in you”) which refers to Abraham and 3:14 ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (“in Christ Jesus”).

¹⁴ Schreiner, 219. “Paul is now at the conclusion of his scriptural argument. He maintains that since the Gentiles have the Holy Spirit, they enjoy the blessing of Abraham. And if they enjoy the blessing of Abraham, they are members of Abraham’s family. And if they are part of Abraham’s family by receiving the Spirit, they do not need to submit to circumcision or the law to become part of the people of God.”

Abraham. They are incorporated into the family of Abraham and the family of God. They must be in Christ, the seed, the Anointed.

Galatians 3:26 Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ ὅτις πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Although there is a legitimate possibility that ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ modifies διὰ ὅτις πίστεως (“through faith”), and functions as the direct object of faith, this is not likely.¹⁵ It is more probable that Paul uses two distinct prepositional phrases διὰ ὅτις πίστεως and ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in which πίστεως is the means of entering the realm and sphere of Christ.¹⁶ Campbell contends that believers have a new relationship with God because of their faith in Jesus Christ, so ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ should be understood as the direct object of πίστεως.¹⁷ While that is theologically true, it appears to only be a secondary point.¹⁸ Exegetically, Paul does not reference faith in an objective sense here. He goes on in the context to describe these sense of oneness in Christ (3:28), belonging to Christ (3:29) through baptism and being clothed with Christ (3:27).¹⁹ Since Jesus is the Son of God,

¹⁵ Campbell, 118; Schreiner, 256; Moo, 250-251; Bruce, 184. Moo and Schreiner acknowledge the legitimacy of this possibility, but neither of them are convinced of this. One reason that Moo, Bruce, and Burton object to reading ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ as the direct object of πίστεως is because it is rare for Paul to use the preposition ἐν after πίστις as a direct object. There are only a few possible exceptions to this rule (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; 1 Tim. 3:13; and 2 Tim. 1:13).

¹⁶ DeSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 76.

¹⁷ Campbell, 118.

¹⁸ Burton, 202-203.

¹⁹ Matera, 144. DeSilva, *Galatians*, 334-336.

believers are adopted as sons of God and are heirs with God through Christ (4:5, 7).²⁰ The language demands a more robust understanding than simply believing in Jesus Christ in an objective fashion. Paul's language demands concepts of participation, union, and incorporation into Christ.²¹ The majority of scholars believe Paul uses ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in Gal. 3:26 to convey notions of incorporation.²² Schreiner suggests that ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ modifies the verb ἐστε ("you are") — believers who have become children of God are actually in Christ in an incorporative and participatory way.²³ Therefore, sonship is granted to believers because they have faith and they enjoy fellowship in Christ.²⁴ As Moo observed, based on the independent nature of the two prepositional phrases, a relationship with God is established through sharing a union with Christ and that union is secured by faith.²⁵

While the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is a common prepositional phrase throughout Paul and it is used seven times in Galatians, this particular section (3:26-29) is critical to understanding the implications Paul meant in his usage of ἐν Χριστῷ. As we have seen so

²⁰ Bruce, 184.

²¹ Bruce, 184. "Believers in Christ are united with him, participate in him, are incorporated into him, and as he is God's Son inherently, so in him they become God's sons and daughters by adoption, anticipating now by the Spirit what is to be fully manifested in the coming glory..."

²² Burton, 202-203; Fee, 184; Fung, 171-172; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 334-336; Betz, 186; Matera, 142; Martyn, 375; Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 155.

²³ Schreiner, 256.

²⁴ Martyn, 375; Fung, 171-172; Betz, 186; Burton, 202-203.

²⁵ Moo, 251.

far in exegesis throughout Galatians, one of the main uses of ἐν Χριστῷ is expressing a participation concept and union with Christ. The relationship between justification and participation in Pauline theology is a point that is debated and whether or not they are essentially the same thing, a clear definition and understanding of ‘participation’ is necessary before any conclusions could be drawn.²⁶ Participation and union with Christ might be related to the ideas of mysticism within Pauline thought.²⁷ The language of being “in Christ” does not imply mystical absorption or loss of individuality, though. Yet, it should not be considered merely a forensic thought. Paul expresses an intimate relationship between Christ and believers in terms of partnership, fellowship, and participation.²⁸

Galatians 3:27 ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε.²⁹

Paul follows up this idea of participation and union with two of the most poignant expressions of participation with Christ. In Gal. 3:27 the concepts of immersion and

²⁶ Sanders, 506; Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 212-213. Contra. Bruce, 185. The relationship between justification and participation will be discussed in the fourth chapter of this paper.

²⁷ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 153.

²⁸ Ibid., 154.

²⁹ Even though 3:27 does not use the prepositional phrase ἐν Χριστῷ, it does refer to εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε (immersion into the Anointed) and being Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε (clothed with Christ). These two statements emphasize participatory action on part of the believer and a qualitatively new relationship with Christ. Also, these two statements are found between two important ἐν Χριστῷ statements (3:26, 28). Therefore, this paper will also exegete 3:27.

clothing are directly connected with being “in Christ.”³⁰ Paul opens verse 27 with γὰρ (“for”) as the rationale to support the notion of being in Christ.³¹ Immersion is often an abbreviated expression for the conversion experience and since Paul says that this immersion puts someone εἰς Χριστὸν, it appears that Paul is showing a connection between faith, baptism, and participation with and in Christ.³² Being clothed (ἐνδύω) with Christ uses the metaphor of putting on clothing and apparel to convey the idea of actually taking on the characteristics of another, that is Christ.³³ Beasley-Murray argues that the imagery of being clothed with Christ first necessitated the figurative removal of old clothing.³⁴ Furthermore, he argues that the language of stripping off-putting on corresponds with the image of dying and rising with Christ that is associated with baptism (Col. 2:12).³⁵ Clothing oneself in Christ may show the significant ethical requirement of transformation as the new creation of God, allowing Christ to be formed within them.³⁶ The idea of putting on and being clothed with Christ is often associated

³⁰ George R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 1962), 147-148.

³¹ DeSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 76; Moo, 251.

³² Beasley-Murray, 151; Moo, 251; Fung, 172; Schreiner, 256-257.

³³ BDAG, 333-334; Dunn, *Galatians*, 204-205; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 156.

³⁴ Beasley-Murray, 148.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 149.

³⁶ Burton, 203; Witherington, 278. “They had just been joined to Christ, and this in turn made incumbent upon them the task of donning the mantle of Christ, acting as Christ acted, following the pattern of his life as presented by Paul.”

with baptism, but its background is perhaps rooted in the Jewish Scriptures.³⁷ Keener shows that Jews spoke about “clothing” in association with the Spirit, righteous behavior, and eschatological clothing.³⁸ However, it could simply be the language of identification with Christ and a new status as children of God.³⁹ DeSilva offers a third suggestion of the sort of transformation Paul has in mind — a social transformation rather than an ethical one.⁴⁰ Even though Paul speaks of a new identity and a new status for believers and describes them as being clothed with Christ, Paul is not merely reiterating what he stated earlier, “For you are all sons of God...” (3:26). The imagery of immersion and donning a new set of clothes is too powerful to simply emphasize a new identity. The new identity that comes with being “in Christ” involves a transformation of behavior and thought. While DeSilva is right in seeing Christ in an incorporated sense and ethical barriers are broken down, it appears that Paul is primarily conveying the significance of the moral, ethical, and character change that believers must undergo. Those who are clothed with Christ must conform themselves to Christ’s pattern of life and thought.

Galatians 3:28 οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἑλλήν, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· ᾗ πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς ἑῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

³⁷ Burton, 204; Bruce, 186; Moo, 252. See Isa. 52:1; 61:10; and Zech. 3:3-4.

³⁸ Keener, 304.

³⁹ Moo, 252; Bruce, 186.

⁴⁰ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 337.

There is little controversy with this verse and the theme of participation in Christ. Most scholars believe Paul uses ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ to refer to the unity that is shared among all of those who are in the realm of Christ.⁴¹ Verse 28 parallels 3:26 in many ways, but the primary distinction and stress is upon the oneness and unity of being in Christ.⁴² The oneness among believers corresponds, as Betz shows, to the singularity of Christ (3:16) and oneness of God (3:20), as well as the gospel (1:6-9; 2:7-8; 5:14) and the one apostle (1:1, 10-12).⁴³ The oneness of those who are ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is expressed through the one body of Christ (Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:13, 27).⁴⁴ DeSilva shows that the “all” of 3:27 are divided into various classes and groups with their distinctions, but in Christ, they are all made one.⁴⁵ Paul’s argument in verse 28 is that these social, cultural, and gender distinctions are removed in Christ.⁴⁶ This passage is not about equality, per se;

⁴¹ Betz, 200; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 157-158; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 337; DeSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 77; Martyn, 377; Campbell, 118; Witherington, 280; Dunn, *Galatians*, 207-208; Bruce, 190; Fung, 176.

⁴² Betz, 200. The distinctions between verses 26 and 28 are subtle, yet significant. Verse 26 focuses on the individual believer’s relationship with God, while verse 28 focuses on the corporate unity among all believers and the destruction of social and cultural barriers. See Longenecker, *Galatians*, 159.

⁴³ Betz, 200; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 339.

⁴⁴ Betz, 200; Martyn, 377, 382; Witherington, 280; Dunn, *Galatians*, 207-208; Bruce, 190; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 158. Even though Paul does not refer to the “body of Christ” in Galatians, it is generally agreed upon that this oneness of believers is expressed in a corporate sense — the church. For more on this, see chapter four of this paper.

⁴⁵ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 337.

⁴⁶ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 158.

this verse is about the unity of all believers who are in Christ.⁴⁷ While distinctions of people and cultural groups can enrich the lives of believers and the church, Paul is showing that from a redemptive standpoint, these distinctions are removed and only the oneness of those who are in Christ is what matters.⁴⁸ While there are three distinct social pairs that are broken down in Christ, the fact that “there is neither Jew nor Greek” is especially important.⁴⁹ In contrast to the Judaizers and their arguments, Paul contends that God has accomplished something new in Christ, not in the Law.⁵⁰ The one God is the God of the Jews and Gentiles and both groups now form one new identity.⁵¹ With the dissolving of these social groups, believers’s identity is formulated “in Christ.”

All of the inequitable barriers between distinctive social groups are done away with and those who are in Christ are one new creation (εἷς; “one”). Since Paul used the masculine form of one, εἷς, it indicates that believers become a new person because they share this unity in the person of Jesus Christ.⁵² The oneness in Christ forms a new group, a new creation, that is founded upon an intimacy with Christ. Therefore, ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is being used to refer to a corporate group that has its foundation, existence, and

⁴⁷ Fung, 176.

⁴⁸ Dunn, *Galatians*, 207-208. The social barriers that can become a source of pride are done away, allowing for integration of different groups to become something altogether new.

⁴⁹ Bruce, 190.

⁵⁰ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 159.

⁵¹ DeSilva, *Galatians*, 339; Martyn, 382; Bruce, 190.

⁵² Martyn, 377; Witherington, 280; Fung, 176.

life in Jesus Christ and not in the various distinctions that they once considered as essential to their identity. The language of participation that is implicit in ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is the heart of Paul's gospel. Paul has moved from talking about justification and faith to conclude his argument with participation and union with Christ. Participation is not fanciful idealism. Union with Christ means that believers have their identity and life "in Christ" and that becomes, in essence, the gospel. As Longenecker concludes, "Being in Christ is the essence of Christian proclamation and experience...without treating the 'in Christ' motif we miss the heart of the Christian message."⁵³ Since ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is the climax of Paul's argument, participation with Christ could also accurately be described as the climax of the gospel itself.

Galatians 3:29 εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ, ἄρα τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ σπέρμα ἐστέ, κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι.

Paul continues to show that being "in Christ" is in a sense belonging to Christ because of the opening clause of verse 29, εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ ("and if you are Christ's"), and it carries with it the force of participation and union because believers belong to Christ.⁵⁴ Participation with Christ is the avenue by which believers are full participants — and not merely recipients — of the blessing of Abraham. Believers belong to Christ and become Abraham's descendants; they become heirs of promise. Believers become participants, heirs, and children in the family of God. Paul's argument throughout

⁵³ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 159.

⁵⁴ Dunn, *Galatians*, 208; Moo, 255; Bruce, 190; Fung, 176; Schreiner, 259.

Galatians 3 is that those who have faith are sons of Abraham (3:7) and being ἐν Χριστῷ is where the blessing of Abraham is secured (3:14). Christ is Abraham's seed (3:16) and when understanding Christ in an incorporative way, believers are ἐν Χριστῷ through their faith, immersion, and being clothed with Christ (3:26-28).⁵⁵ Therefore, being "in Christ" places someone "in Abraham" and heirs according to the promise. Of particular importance for Paul's argument, Gentiles are included into the family of Abraham by faith, not by circumcision.⁵⁶ The blessing of Abraham is given to Gentiles who believe, having been accomplished through Christ, and being ἐν Χριστῷ and not in the Law is where those blessings will be fulfilled.⁵⁷

Summary of ἐν Χριστῷ in Galatians

At the conclusion of my second chapter, I set forth these observations about ἐν Χριστῷ: 1) it carries a sense of incorporation into the sphere and realm of Christ (1:22; 2:4; 5:6); and 2) it may show instrumentality and agency (2:17). The sense of incorporation continue to be present in Gal. 3:14, 26, and 28, as well. The sense of incorporation is especially highlighted in the oneness and unity of being "in Christ" (3:28) just as Paul stated earlier in the letter concerning the churches that are "in Christ" (1:22). Also significant is the notion of belonging to Christ that is conveyed with being "in Christ" (3:28-29) and becoming a participant in the family of God and family of

⁵⁵ Dunn, *Galatians*, 208;

⁵⁶ Witherington, 281; Bruce, 191; Fung, 178.

⁵⁷ Matera, 147; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 158.

Abraham (3:26, 29). Paul's use of ἐν Χριστῷ signifies an intentional use of participation terminology. It is dense and significant to Paul's argument in the epistle to the Galatians. The language of participation becomes prominent in these verses and they become programmatic for explorations in Paul's theology. The fourth and final chapter of this paper will carefully examine the idea of participation and what it means for shaping theological understanding and for practical ministry, as well.

Chapter Four

Participating in Christ: Implications for Theology and Ministry

From the previous two chapters, it has been demonstrated that ἐν Χριστῷ contains the ideas of: incorporation, the realm and sphere of Christ, and instrumentality and agency. Being ἐν Χριστῷ is not only what makes inclusion into the family of God possible, it is what gives it significance, as well. Participating “in Christ” gives a new sense of existence and being, as well as providing the characteristic of unity and oneness for all of those who are incorporated in Christ and belong to Christ.¹ From examining Paul’s letter to the Galatians and the use of ἐν Χριστῷ within the epistle, several theological issues can be found that directly influence, or at least related to, the Pauline concept of participation in Christ.² In this chapter, I will explore three theological issues related to participation language from Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Those theological motifs are: the body of Christ, adoption, and justification, which will be considered in the rest of this chapter.

The Body of Christ

¹ Betz, 201. Betz shows that Gal. 3:29 is the conclusion of Paul’s argument in Gal. 3:26-28 and that being “in Christ” means the same thing when Paul writes of belonging “to Christ.”

² Grant Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 220-227. Macaskill highlights the themes of adoption, new creation, temple, and Spirit images as elements involved with participatory language within Paul.

The body of Christ and Paul's ἐν Χριστῷ language shapes the theology of body of Christ and the church. In his comments on Gal. 3:28 and being "one in Christ Jesus," Betz states: "Paul does not explain in detail what he means by being 'one in Christ Jesus,' but we can infer this from Rom. 10:4 [sic] ('the many of us are one body in Christ...').³ Even though Paul does not thoroughly explain the body of Christ metaphor in the book of Galatians, the concept of the ekklesia is implied and assumed from the outset of the epistle (Gal. 1:2, 22). Paul states that the churches of Judea as being ἐν Χριστῷ. Being members of the church and being members of the body of Christ are one and the same, which explains why being in the body of Christ and being members of that body are closely associated with faith and baptism.⁴

The sense of incorporation, inclusiveness, abiding, and participating in Christ are sometimes described as a Pauline mysticism.⁵ Whether the term mysticism is the best description of the Paul's understanding of the body of Christ is debatable, it is clear that within his understanding of the body of Christ, being in Christ and members of the body

³ Betz, 200; Bruce, 184; Witherington, 281; Moo, 252-254. In their explanation of being "one in Christ Jesus," Betz, Bruce, and Witherington use the terms "body of Christ." Witherington also describes the body of Christ as the Christian community. Moo shows comparisons of language with Gal. 3:28, 1 Cor. 12:13, and Col. 3:11, of which 1 Cor. 12 is particularly important in its use of body of Christ terminology.

⁴ Bruce, 184.

⁵ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London: A. & C. Black, 1953), 116. Schweitzer describes the body of Christ as the "mystical body of Christ." While I do not favor the term mystical, the understanding of the church as a universal body, or community, of all who have fellowship with Jesus is what is being described by Schweitzer.

— the ekklesia — are fundamental to participating with Christ. The significance of the body of Christ and the church are further enhanced when new creation and temple language are seen. In Gal. 5:6, Paul affirms, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” Craig Keener and others argue correctly that Paul’s statement in Gal. 5:6 about faith working through love and 6:15 about the new creation are equivalent phrases.⁶ Being in Christ renders circumcision and uncircumcision as nothing and ineffective for the basis of justification and new life. Paul’s objective throughout Galatians was to show that justification was apart from the works of the Law. They never received the Spirit or life from the works of the Law (Gal. 3:2-5). New life and new creation are found only in Jesus, as Paul contends in Gal. 3:26-28. Macaskill argues that Paul’s new creation language is derived from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, in which Isaiah speaks of the restoration of God’s people through the Servant so that God’s salvation might reach to the end of the earth (Isa. 49:5-6).⁷ According to Macaskill, the themes of Jerusalem, Zion, and the temple are interwoven to set forth the expectations of the Messianic age.⁸ Indeed, in Gal. 2:9, Paul states that James, Peter, and John were pillars in the church. The term ‘pillars’ is clearly

⁶ Keener, 458; Macaskill, 225; Schreiner, 317.

⁷ Macaskill, 226; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40-66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), Kindle Location 5917; John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, Anchor Bible, 20 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 106. In Isa. 49:5, the Servant of YHWH’s mission is to restore Israel so that ultimately God’s salvation might reach to the “end of the earth” (Isa. 49:6)

⁸ Macaskill, 226. He also recognizes the influence of Ezekiel within Paul’s writing, especially as it pertains to the role of the Spirit and its correlation with the temple language that Paul often uses in his letters.

rooted in the imagery of the temple. Therefore, it appears that the church is spoken of not only as the body of Christ, but as the new temple of God in which his Spirit dwells.⁹

Those who are “in Christ” have a faith that works through the demonstration of love become participants in the church and new temple of God, even to the degree that some of the apostles could be described as “pillars” and have received the Spirit (Gal. 3:3, 5).

Adoption

In Gal. 3:26, Paul’s use of ἐν Χριστῷ is categorically associated with the idea of being children (υἱοὶ) of God. Paul further develops the theology of being children of God in Gal. 4:1-7. Being in Jesus Christ makes a believer a child of God through the process of adoption (υἱοθεσι). Regarding υἱοθεσι, *BDAG* states that adoption is a legal transaction that involves a transfer of “a transcendent filial relationship between God and humans (with the legal aspect, not gender specificity, as major semantic component).”¹⁰ Those who believe in Christ are bestowed the full rights of children.¹¹ First, it appears evident that the sonship of Jesus is ‘natural,’ i.e., not through adoption (Gal. 4:4).¹² Second, being a child of God is by adoption which is through faith in the redemptive work of God (Gal.

⁹ Ibid., 226-227.

¹⁰ *BDAG*, 1024.

¹¹ Ibid. See definition b.

¹² Keener, 339; Schreiner, 270; Macaskill, 223.

4:4-5; cf. 3:26).¹³ Third, throughout the book of Galatians, God is presented as “our Father” (ἡμῶν; Gal. 1:3-4).¹⁴

Paul’s theology of believers being adopted as children of God is unique to the Pauline epistles since no other New Testament author references υἱοθεσία.¹⁵ There are many questions pertaining to the background to Paul’s reference of adoption, and it appears to come from a Greco-Roman influence rather than a Jewish one. Being God’s ‘son’ is rooted in ideas from the Old Testament scriptures.¹⁶ The Old Testament references to Israel being God’s ‘son’ are critically important because those references in Exodus and Hosea both refer to God’s election of Israel as a corporate group to whom God would enter into a covenant relationship, which is precisely Paul’s point in the book of Galatians about believers developing a corporate identity in Christ (Gal. 3:28).¹⁷

Believers in Christ are called the “Israel of God” and are described in terms as the elect, corporate, body of Christ, who have become participants in the new covenant God made available through Abraham’s seed, including Gentiles.¹⁸ There is much debate

¹³ Bruce, 198; Macaskill, 223.

¹⁴ Macaskill, 223. God is identified as the Father in Gal. 1:1, 3, 4; and 4:6 to describe the filial relationship between Christians and God.

¹⁵ Witherington, 289; Moo, 268.

¹⁶ Bruce, 197; Moo, 268. See Exo. 4:22; Hos. 11:1.

¹⁷ Bruce, 197. Paul speaks of the children of Israel as adopted ‘sons’ in Rom. 9:4. Corporate election and the theme of covenant are critical to Paul’s argument in Rom. 9.

¹⁸ Moo, 401; Dunn, *Galatians*, 345; Betz, 322; Martyn, 566; Keener, 581; Hays, *Echoes*, 96-97; Barclay, 98; DeSilva, *Galatians*, 513.

surrounding the source and identity of the group to whom Paul's benediction of "peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). Keener identifies at least six major positions that have been debated on the phrase "Israel of God." Those positions identify the "Israel of God" as a) ethnic Israel; b) Jewish believers in Christ who observe the law; c) Jewish people who are converted at the eschatological time of the end; d) Jewish believers in Jesus who do not impose circumcision on Gentiles; e) the church, including Jews and Gentiles; and f) the church and ethnic Israel.¹⁹ The position that the "Israel of God" refers to the church has been the majority view throughout history.²⁰ The "Israel of God" is equivalent to the new creation that are "in Christ" and are therefore the adopted children of God (Gal. 6:15-16; cf. 5:6; 3:26-29).

The evidence of believers, particularly Gentile believers, as being the adopted children of God is the reception of the Spirit (Gal. 4:6).²¹ Believers are adopted as sons through faith ἐν Χριστῷ and they receive the Spirit and have a new relationship with God. Paul's theology of adoption by God through Christ leads to the conclusion that through participation by faith ἐν Χριστῷ provides believers with blessing, fellowship, family, and adoption with God.

Justification

¹⁹ Keener, 578-579.

²⁰ Ibid., 579.

²¹ Macaskill, 224-225; Keener, 345.

The doctrine of justification by grace through faith is regarded as one of the most prominent Pauline teachings. Through the monumental work of E. P. Sanders in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, some of the theological assumptions associated with the doctrine of justification have been reexamined. For many years, the doctrine of justification by faith has been considered the epicenter of Paul's theology. Sanders suggested that participation would be a better alternative for understanding Paul's theology as a whole.²² He admittedly struggled to present the Pauline thought of participation in a systematic and cohesive way.²³ Sanders observed the juristic ideas Paul used to express the doctrine of justification, but he also recognized the expressions of participation. He discouraged strict grounds of distinguishing between justification and participation; rather, he looked for ways to promote the integration of the two ideas.²⁴ Sanders ultimately arrived at the conclusion that justification by faith and participation "ultimately amount to the same thing."²⁵ Schweitzer goes on to speak about the union of "being in Christ" as the

²² Sanders, 522-523.

²³ Sanders, 522. "But what does this mean? How are we to understand it? We seem to lack a category of 'reality' — real participation in Christ, real possession of the Spirit — which lies between naive cosmological speculation and belief in magical transference on the one hand and a revised self-understanding on the other. I must confess that I do not have a new category of perception to propose here. This does not mean, however, that Paul did not have one."

²⁴ Ibid., 472, 501. See also Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 213.

²⁵ Ibid., 506.

dominant theological idea that connects redemption with the expression of emotions and thoughts for those who are in Christ.²⁶

Several New Testament scholars and theologians have examined and reexamined the ideas associated with justification and its relationship with participation in Christ. Richard B. Hays contends that understanding Paul's soteriology requires the categorical understanding of participation with Christ.²⁷ Hays argues that Jesus is more than our example; "he is the prototype of redeemed humanity."²⁸ Therefore, the redeemed are influenced by Christ's story. Christ enacted the story and those who are "in Christ" reenact it.²⁹ Upon believers's reenactment of the story of Christ, they become participants in that very story, sharing in Jesus's destiny and character.³⁰ While Hays suggests the narrative of Jesus's faithfulness as a key to understanding participation, he admits it cannot be the only one that is considered to understand real participation in Christ.³¹ Michael J. Gorman also contends, like Hays, that justification is best explained as

²⁶ Schweitzer, 124.

²⁷ Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, xxix-xxxiii.

²⁸ Ibid., xxix.

²⁹ Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, xxix. "In a mysterious way, Jesus has enacted our destiny, and those who are in Christ are shaped by the pattern of his self-giving death. He is the prototype of redeemed humanity."

³⁰ Ibid., xxxi.

³¹ Ibid., 215. He also says that other elements within Paul are important in shaping an understanding of participation, such as "sacramental realism" and the fellowship of believers in community within the body of Christ.

participation in Christ's faithfulness and covenantal fulfillment.³² Gorman does not believe Paul has multiple soteriological models. He affirms that Paul only has one model: justification by co-crucifixion with Christ, thus participation with the story of Christ and the cross. Gorman categorizes the language of justification as: theological (reference to the divine character), covenantal (the moral obligations associated with those in a covenant relationship with God), legal (referring to the juridical and pardoning actions of God), and eschatological (reference to the future judgment and salvation).³³

As might be expected with any discussion pertaining to Pauline soteriology, Paul's epistle to the Galatians is critical to the discussion. Hays concluded that "the soteriological logic of Galatians is participatory."³⁴ Both Gorman and Hays appeal to Galatians for a better understanding of participation and a new approach to understanding justification. Gorman argues that Gal. 2:15-21 serves as an explanation of Paul's own interpretation of justification.³⁵ He contends that coming to texts about justification with a singular, "boxed-in" definitions of justification, such as a forensic or covenantal view, severely limits Paul's teaching about justification and greatly diminish the language of

³² Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 44.

³³ Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, 54.

³⁴ Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, xxxii.

³⁵ Michael J. Gorman, *Participating in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 119.

participation.³⁶ Gorman continues to argue that Christ's death is the means of justification, as opposed to works of the Law as impotent means of being justified (Gal. 2:16).³⁷ The mode of justification is through faith and participation with Christ's death (Gal. 2:20-21).³⁸ The kind of participation that Paul develops, as Gorman explains, is a faith that is crucified with Christ — co-crucifixion — and raised with Christ to have Christ living in Paul (and believers) — co-resurrection — which forcefully concludes with the idea that justification is a putting to death of the old self and the transformative new life in Christ.³⁹ According to Gorman, through participation and faith someone is then placed into a state of being “in Christ.”⁴⁰ Pauline soteriology is developed throughout Galatians, and Gal. 2:15-21 in particular, is an important section in the epistle and it touches on the justification, faith, and participation through co-crucifixion and co-resurrection. Paul continues to develop his concept of faith with its close association with immersion in Gal. 3:26-27 which causes a believer to be clothed with Christ and in Christ.

Summarizing Participation in Christ

³⁶ Ibid., 122. As opposed to Schreiner, 155-157 and Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 958-959.

³⁷ Gorman, *Participating in Christ*, 123-126.

³⁸ Ibid., 127.

³⁹ Ibid., 128, 134-138; Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 847.

⁴⁰ Gorman, *Participating in Christ*, 129. While Gorman believes Paul uses ἐν Χριστῷ to refer to the sphere or realm of Christ in Gal. 2:17, I am more persuaded that ἐν Χριστῷ is used in an instrumental way when reading verses 16 and 17 as a unit.

Participation in Christ emphasizes the close union and fellowship that believers have with Jesus Christ. It places the believer in the body of Christ, providing fellowship with other believers. Participation in Christ provides a reassessing of important doctrines, such as justification and faith, while also seeing the integration of those ideas, rather than the distinctions between them. Participation in Christ can be an especially helpful and encouraging way to forge new dialogue on old assumptions, such as justification, soteriology, and ecclesiology. Participation in Christ can also stir up new conversations about Paul's theocentric thought and theology. Developing a view of participation can be a helpful way to bring new appreciation in a ministry context, as well.

Implications for Ministry

Participation in Christ develops a more robust theology, but it can also be instrumental in developing a robust ministry, too. Participation in Christ not only shapes the gospel; participation in Christ is the gateway to living the gospel and becoming participants in the gospel's mission.⁴¹

1. Participation in Christ creates a sense of community among Christians and church (Gal. 1:22)
2. Participation in Christ removes the things that divide and promotes unity among believers (Gal. 3:28)

⁴¹ See Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015) for more on this concept.

3. Participation in Christ requires an informed view of the Old Testament, how God has fulfilled his plan in Jesus, and how believers still benefit from that today (Gal. 3:6-14).
4. Participation in Christ will shape preaching on salvation, faith, justification, and obedience (Gal. 3:26-27).
5. Participation in Christ will develop a respect for baptism (Gal. 3:27).
6. Participation in Christ reveals an orientation to God and a new relationship with God as our Father (Gal. 1:1, 3-4; 4:7).
7. Participation in Christ creates a more robust view of the gospel that is preached. Participation helps believers see God's activity and purposes accomplished through his Anointed One.

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